ON THE MAKE

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WITHDRAWN

ON THE MAKE

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By

JOHN RIORDAN

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FOR

MAVIS

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BOTTLE OF TOKAY

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THEY were in the Ford heading for the city. It was a spring night. They were out for a few glasses of beer to fix the evening. Eddie said they ought to try the Hofbrau first. Jim wanted to go to Pete's for the pretzels. Mike sat quietly; he was watching the street. There were a few girls in spring togs out with spring fever, who waved to the Ford.

They got to the Hofbrau first but no one was there. A few old fellows were sitting in the corner alcoves. Two seidels of beer apiece and potato chips were enough for them. The beer was soggy. They got down-hearted. Jim said, "Come on to Pete's."

Pete said, "Hello, young fellows, off the wagon again?"

Mike said, "Some of that good beer, Mister Pete, and don't be faint-hearted."

There were only a few here too, and the beer was more wet than wicked. There were no collegians here either. Jim wanted to see some college life. Mike was the college boy, "Joe College," of the gang, Eddie was preparing, and Jim was still the home-town boy.

Mike said, "Let's try the beach, the boys aren't feeling their city oats yet."

They had a couple more glasses, then they broke off in their wagon down the back road to the beach.

But it was too damned early for the beach, none of the stands had been opened. It was bleak and deserted, the forgotten city. Only a bright light sparkled here and now in the home life of a suburban people.

There was a saloon open. The bartender didn't have any apron. The beer was the worst yet. They wandered out and around the deserted village. Along the ocean edge the waters had thrown up logs and wreckage; the long

pier swayed on its rotting timbers, which the new light from the new moon made spectral. It was warm enough so that all three opened their throats and threw their hats back off the forehead. They had beaten the season to the beach. Jim had started the expedition, but he didn't know what to do now.

Eddie said, "Let's go back to the old home town, it's got more life than this burg."

Jim said, "What's the matter with that gang of yours, Mike, does it take half a season to get them started? Where are your wine swiggers to-night?"

Mike said, "We've certainly got the drop on them this time. I'm sorry you guys came along at the wrong time. Take me back to the house on your way out, will you?"

Jim and Eddie both said, "Oh, come on, Mike, you can't leave us now. We're just starting. We're not through yet. You come back to the old home town with us, we'll put you up for the night."

Mike said all right and they headed back.

They had had enough drinks to feel down.

Jim said, "Drinking's an art which has certainly degraded. Take those old boys, they knew how."

Mike said, "You need a red-hot poker in good beer to make it a real drink. It warms it in the middle."

Eddie said, "This stuff they're turning out now hasn't got the time in it. It needs the time to be good. It needs to be kept and kept well." They talked it over all the way in. It was a subject which had their spirits.

The stuff they got at two places was fearful. It was not anywhere near beer. Eddie thought of Debrollik's. It was across the river from the railroad station, right on the river banks. The street it was on cut straight between the two bridges, but it dipped in the middle below the level of either. Scarcely anyone used it, it was a shunned street.

There were a few Poles and Czechs around a table. Jim walked up to the bar, put one foot on the bar rail, and asked old Debrollik if he

had any good beer. "Sure, boy, sure," he said, "good beer." They tried a glass.

Eddie took only one sip. "Good beer," he said, "like good women is non-existent in these parts."

Mike asked Debrollik, "Whadiya got that's good, got any good wine, any good liquors? We don't want whisky."

Debrollik said, "Sure boy, good wine." Then he brought out a tall bottle, a beautiful bright blood red. The label said, "Tokay wine bottled for sacramental purposes only."

Mike said, "Fine, let's have a little drink." That drink was sweet guzzling. They were all leaning on the rail, and they nodded toward each other. It was a real drink.

Mike said, "Let's buy the bottle, it's cheaper than drinking by the shot."

They bought it, and Debrollik wouldn't let them drink over the bar. They went out to the car with Mike holding the bottle under his coat, close to his heart.

They drove out of the city toward the back

country. Mike was in the front seat with Jim, the driver, and Eddie sat in back. Mike started swigging the bottle and sent it over his shoulder back to Eddie. Jim couldn't get a drink while driving. He was directing the party, so he didn't mind. Mike and Eddie had nearly finished the bottle when they were far enough from the city to stop. Mike was hugging the beautiful tall bright blood-red bottle. Jim dragged it away from him.

Mike said, "This has got the time in it, Eddie, this has got plenty of time in it, and now we've got the time in us. Plenty time for everything, baseball, science, and the art of drinking. Plenty."

Mike got out and Eddie followed. Mike went over to the side of the road, and stood looking down through a canebrake on a field of shrubs and stone. Eddie was plugging like a two-miler up and down the road limbering up his legs.

Jim finished the bottle in a couple of draughts. He said, "Come on back in the car, you drunks."

Eddie kept on his course, and Mike didn't move. Jim got out and went after Eddie. He missed him the first time he went by, but got him on the return. He said, "Come on, old boy, you've won. Let's get Mike."

They looked to the spot where Mike had been, and there was no Mike. No Mike anywhere in sight. Jim said, "Christ, what the hell has happened to that booze?" They went over to the side of the road. There was Mike lying on his back, supported by the canebrake. It was a tough thick brake, and it had broken off a ten-foot fall. Mike was lying there calmly, looking up at the stars and murmuring quietly. They had a hell of a time getting him out. He didn't want to leave his wilderness bed; he made no effort to get up. Eddie slid to the bottom the first time he tried to give him a shove. Jim helped Eddie up; then they heaved Mike to the surface and got him back into the car.

Mike said, "Where is the bottle, where is my good bottle?"

Jim said, "It's safe, Mike, don't worry."

Eddie threw the bottle out of the car as they drove by the park. Mike heard it crash into the shrubbery. He said, "Eddie, did you throw that nice bottle away? Say, listen, Eddie, what's the idea of throwing that nice tall bright bloody bottle? Didn't it do all right for you? My nice bottle. Say, Eddie, that was pretty mean of you, I didn't know you were as mean as that."

Jim said, "That's all right, Mike, don't die over that bottle. It was finished easily. It had an easy time getting into you and Eddie."

Jim was driving back by a random route. He was giving them plenty of time to sober up before they got home. He thought the drive in the wind would help. Mike wanted to get out and walk. He said, "Say, Jim, let's stop this old rattletrap and have a little stretch. Let's have a little walk to sober up. I need a little walk."

Jim was afraid that neither of them would come back into the car again. He couldn't watch them both on the ground. He said, "That's all

right, Mike, you'll sober," and kept right on going. Mike was getting rocky.

He said, "I got to get out, Jim."

He started to open the door and Jim and Eddie both got hold of him. Eddie said, "Let's stop, Jim, a little walk will do him good."

Mike got out and started along the street at a good rate. Jim said, "I knew this would happen." He yelled, "Hey, Mike, where are you going?"

Mike said, "I'm going back to my room, Jim. Just a little walk. Can't stay in that car all my life. Got to walk."

He was headed for the open country. If he kept on walking all night he'd land somewhere back in the hills. Eddie dashed after him. He said, "Come on back, Mike. It's too early to walk home. I'll walk home with you later."

Mike said, "It's all right, Eddie. I'm in no hurry. But you know a fellow can't spend all his life in a small car like that. He's got to get out and move. Action, that's the ticket. Can't let the machine do all the work, got to move.

Jim's got the wrong idea. He's a good fellow but he's got the wrong idea, he thinks the machine can do it. He's all wrong, Eddie."

Jim said, "Come on Mike, cut the gab. I'm going to drive you down for a little coffee and grub."

Mike wouldn't get in. He talked, and then he turned about and started up the street. Jim stopped him, and he turned back. Thus they paced the greensward. Then he and Jim wrestled. Mike liked this and went at it with fury. They rolled around on the ground, Jim laughing. Eddie sat on them. Eddie and Jim picked him up and shoved him in the back of the car, and Eddie went in after him.

Mike lay back and dozed. Eddie leaned over the seat onto Jim's shoulder. He said, "What's the matter with you, Jim, why didn't you get drunk too? Trying to get us drunk while you sit on and watch the show? What's the idea?"

Jim said, "All the stuff was gone when I got a chance at it. I've got to drive the car and take care of you bums."

Eddie said, "That's all right, Jim, needn't worry about me. I can take care of myself any old day in the week. I don't need any guy like you to take care of me and I never did. You think you can take care of me and Mike, Jim, because you're a little older. But you're wrong, Jim, you're no better than we are. You may have the experience, but Mike and me have got the brains. We've got the brains, Jim, no mistaking that, and don't you forget it."

Jim said, "Oh, you're drunk, Eddie, you don't know what you're talking about. Forget about going to college for a while and be a man. You're no better than any of the rest of us, even if you do plug the books. Come out of it."

Eddie said, "That isn't the point, Jim. You don't give us the credit. We've got the brains, Jim, and you've got the experience. You can tell us where to get off, but we can tell you where to get off too. We got the theory, we figure it out for you, and you go do it."

Jim said, "Sure you've got the theory, but

it's all in the books. We've got to work it out. You're lost without the books. You learn how to make a few little marks on paper or to copy out of the books, but we guys in the factory have got to put the things together."

They stopped on Main Street before the all-night restaurant. Eddie kept right on talking. Mike was like a sack of wheat in the back of the car. Jim pushed Eddie aside, pulled Mike up, straightened his hat and his tie, and brushed off his coat.

He turned to Eddie and said, "Look at this fine-looking bundle of theory."

Mike said, "Where are we?"

Eddie said, "That's all right, Jim, Mike's all right. He's got the theory."

He got Jim by the coat and buttonholed him. He said, "Now listen, Jim, you've got the practice, see."

Jim said, "Let go my coat, Eddie. I'm trying to be nice to you, but you let go of my coat or I'll drop you. Hear?"

Mike was wandering down the street. Jim

went after him and piloted him to the restaurant. Eddie followed. Jim took Mike along to the men's room; he said to Eddie, "I want a ham-and-egg. Get some black coffee for Mike."

Mike got sick, and he came out of the men's room a frozen white. He said, "I'm all right, Jim, all I need is a little time."

Eddie was eating a cheese sandwich at the counter and talking to a few fellows; he had forgotten about Jim's sandwich and Mike's coffee.

Jim said to the Greek, "Black coffee and make it hot."

Mike didn't want to drink it. It was steaming. Jim said, "Come on, Mike, it'll do you good." Mike took a sup and it burned his throat. His lips were burned red, they looked very red within the whiteness of his face. Jim was watching him. He said, "You'll be all right, Mike."

Eddie came over to the table. He said, "Sure, Mike's all right, even though he can't hold his liquor like a man. Mike's the boy that's got the brain."

Jim said, "Shut off the gas, Eddie, you're going downhill."

Jim went over to the counter to get the food. Eddie went on talking. He said, "What's the matter with you, Mike? Why don't you speak up? You've got the brains, you can talk with anyone around here. Talk up, Mike."

Mike wasn't saying a word, he was still pale. Eddie said, "Oh, the hell with you, Mike, you're dumb to-night."

He got up and went over to the counter.

He said, "Mike's dumb. He can talk, he's not like the other dumb boloneys around here, but he won't talk. Now you take Jim . . ."

Snapper Winslow picked him up on this. "Wait a minute, guy, what was that fast one about the guys around here? Step back a bit, fellows, I'm aching to drive this guy."

Jim came over and got between them. "Lay off, Snapper, can't you see how far under he is? He don't know what the hell he's saying." He took Eddie back to the table.

Eddie said, "Mike, Jim's been playing us

dirty. He got us drunk so's we'd be making fools out of ourselves. He's the worker, Mike, and he wants to see how the brains work. That's why he got us drunk."

Jim leaned over, put the butt of his hand under Eddie's chin, and shoved back a bit. He said, "Shut up, Eddie, we've heard enough of that bull. Lay off it."

Eddie was sore. He got up to get a lead at Jim. Mike said, "Eddie, you leave Jim alone. Jim's all right. Jim's taken care of us fine."

Eddie said, "Sure, Jim's all right. But what the hell's he do a thing like that for? I'm leaving him alone. I'm not bothering him. What's the idea of pushing me?"

Jim said, "You're too noisy, Eddie. Eat your sandwich and we'll go. Mike, you'd better have some more coffee."

Eddie didn't get over it; he was bellyaching all the way home. Mike was subdued. He had a headache and his face was funny. Jim was going over what Eddie had said. Christ, it wasn't his fault that he wasn't going to college.

He'd work a hell of a lot harder than Eddie if he got a chance. A fellow who worked all day couldn't come home and work all night. Anyway, didn't he read Schopenhauer?

A WINNING TEAM

A WINNING TEAM

8000 FOOTBALL FANS SEE CANTON HIGH SCHOOL SHUT OUT NAGANSETT.

THANKSGIVING DAY GAME BETWEEN RIVAL SCHOOL TEAMS RESULTS IN VICTORY FOR LOCALS BY 20–0 SCORE—BIGGEST CROWD EVER SEEN AT ATHLETIC FIELD WITNESS CONTEST—GAME A HARD FOUGHT ONE AND FULL OF THRILLS

. . . Of the heroes of the fray, Bob Bradley's work stood out most prominently. Besides doing some good ground gaining, it was his unfailing feats in taking the ball over the line every time occasion demanded that made Canton's victory possible. Starting low and fast, Bradley hit the line like a battering ram, and Giordano showed excellent judgment in having him take the ball over when Nagansett was resisting to its utmost on its final stripe. It was a great day

for Bradley, who wound up his career with the high-school eleven in a manner of which he may be proud.

Another whose accomplishments deserve much credit is Tommie Giordano, whose work in advancing the ball was one of the brightest spots of the afternoon, while when it came to directing the team as field general, he looked like a veteran. Tom's judgment in running the team was faultless, and one of the reasons why Canton won was because Giordano handled the job of field general beyond reproach.

BOB'S muscles were sore and stiff and tight. He felt like a convalescent; he should be treated gently and protected from other damages. He felt as if he had won the war or saved the dam. There was a large bump, beginning to be black and blue, beneath his left eye. The skin was ripped on his hands, which were a raw red. He smelled all over of liniment his mother had spent a lot of time in rubbing well in. She was worried about him, she had felt over all his body for broken bones,

and now she interrupted his reverie, bothering him by asking if he really felt hurt. His regular clothes were light and soft on him as if on a Roman athlete tended by an emperor. He was waiting for Tommie to come along with the Ford.

The 'phone rang, and it was Betty. She admired the way he had played. She was thrilled. It was just wonderful. She'd see him at the mass celebration. Bob took his compliments gracefully. He said he had been scared most of the time. They went on till Tommie came; Bob rang off as soon as Tommie made a try for the 'phone.

Tommie was a stocky little fellow. He came in taking off his gloves and smoking a big cigar. His hair was glistening with grease, like that of Valentino. He wore a scarf wrapped tight around his neck, and a new overcoat. His dark olive-oily face was placid and beaming. He and Mrs. Bradley talked about the game while Bob dressed.

Bob had been nervous waiting; he had cursed

Tommie for being late, while lounging in the armchair, half dressed. He was happy now, fussing around getting ready. His scarf was missing, his cuff links weren't right, his hair wouldn't stay down. All the time he hunted he groaned with the pain from his bruised body.

Tommie said he didn't feel the game at all. "A little soreness here and there, just enough to make you feel you've been doing a little work."

Bob shouted, "Olive oil makes him feel like that. You should have heard him when that great big lumberjack tackled him. He thought he was staying underground."

Tommie said, "Never mind that now. Hurry up and leave off powdering your nose, good-looking, or we'll be late for the candy and cakes."

They drove off in a Ford closed delivery wagon. In the back of it were bread baskets, crumbs of bread, and ends of groceries. "A fine way for a couple of heroes to go to a

banquet," Bob said. They drove through Main Street; there were plenty of people out, and most of them headed for the City Hall for the celebration. A drove of cars lined the street, both sides. They parked in a side street, right opposite the Bijou Theatre.

Crossing to the hall, they had to stop to acknowledge congratulations on every side. Bob led the way and didn't stop long with anyone. Tommie wanted to tell the inside story of the game to everyone, how he decided on each play. Bob kept yelling at him and finally dragged him into the back room of the hall.

The football team was in a flutter like a girls' school. Each shining face had a shining nose. A crowd gathered about Bob to talk about the touchdowns; each was to get his share of the glory. Bob shouldered his way through them and took off his coat. He didn't mind talking about himself, but when they shifted to talking about themselves they were pretty stupid. Tommie was high-hatting too; he

pushed the subs out of the way to make a seat for himself. Bob went over to the coach.

He said, "How did you like it, Mr. Dorgan?"

"Fine work, Bob, you played the best game of the season. I was thinking you wouldn't hold out at the rate you started. I needed you in there, and I let you alone to see how you'd work it out."

Tommie waited for Mr. Dorgan to say something to him, but nothing was said. Bob blushed. "They were easy after the first quarter. Harlow and Dugan were making great big holes on the left side, and I just galloped through."

On the stage Bob wished it was over. He saw Betty in the orchestra. The superintendent of schools talked, the principal of high school talked, Bunny Harlow, captain and star end, talked, but the applause didn't really begin till Bob got up to say his few words of why they were as good as they were. He blushed this time, too; he wasn't a speech maker. Tom-

mie shoved him to the middle of the stage. Tommie said, "Come on, Bob, right through their right guard." Bob said his piece as if it had been told him.

After that he tried to get Betty to understand she was to get another girl for Tommie. He instructed Tommie as to how they would work it. They wouldn't stay for the dance, and they wouldn't go to the super's party. As soon as the speaking stopped Tommie would speed out and get the car out of traffic away from the mob. They'd get the girls in the wagon and go for a ride. Tommie said the old man had to have the car back at nine in order to drive for supplies. It was after nine already. Bob said, "He'll forget about it; anyway, let him wait, and maybe we can get into one of the girls' shacks."

When they got to the dressing room Bob pushed Tommie out with coat and scarf flying about him. Tommie said, "Cut it, Bob, don't rush me." Bob crossed backstage and met Betty in front with Helen Ferris. They wanted

to stay to dance, but he persuaded them; Betty liked dancing but she liked Bob more. Helen didn't need much persuading. She was glad to come along, though she didn't like Tommie much; she thought he was too small. Helen was a large plump girl who didn't get around much; none of the boys could see her. But she had money and was dressing up to it. For this she was being taken on by the most popular girls. Bob thought she was very nice—for Tommie.

They found that Tommie couldn't get the machine started. He said, "I'm sorry, girls, but the old buggy has commenced to buck." Quite a few people passing on Main Street looked their way, and Bob rushed the girls into the back of the car, where they sat on the bread baskets.

A few players passed, on their way for sodas. They said, "Are you guys going to the super's?"

Bob said, "Sure we are, I'm taking my father and mother and my two cousins."

Then to Tommie, "What the hell's the matter, Tommie? You had this junk box running

all day and now it stops on you. Hurry up, will you—we'll never get anywhere."

Tommie said, "Don't rush me, man. Where are you going, anyway—to the North Pole? Or across the continent?"

At last the animal started, and buzzed away down a back street. It bounced over the road, and the girl rose off the bread baskets. Swinging around corners, girls and bread baskets slid from side to side and from back to front. At first the girls said it was grand, but they were having a rotten time of it. Bob wouldn't let them come up on the driver's seat; he said they'd all be ruined. He said they were having a fine time.

They got out before they got to the garage. Helen's house wasn't far, and when Tommie got back they set out walking. Bob paired off with Betty immediately—in order to give Tommie and Helen a chance to get acquainted.

Tommie didn't like the arrangement. Betty was a slim, pretty girl, and she had gone around plenty. Helen was plump, she was eager for

boys, but she was boy-shy. He got Bob aside and said, "What the hell's the idea, Bob, was she the only woman in the hall?"

"Come on now, Tommie, be a sport. You don't know when you're lucky. She gives some swell parties. Play up to her, this is your chance. It's all velvet for you now."

Tommie didn't see it that way. It was all velvet for Bob to get invited because he didn't have to take Helen. However, he was game to make a play for her. He was just beginning to get in class, and he was working all his points. Tommie made the yards midfield, and Bob took it over.

Tommie liked the house. There was a fireplace and a great davenport in front of it, ideal with any other girl. Helen's mother was of the young type with silk stockings and interesting clothes and as much interested in their goings-on as they were themselves.

She noticed Bob's black eye. She said, "I thought you boys would be home in bed to-night

after that terrible game. That's a pleasant little beauty mark you have," she said to Bob.

Bob said, "I wish I had some beauty to mark, Mrs. Ferris. All the beauty was on the sidelines this afternoon, except Tommie, and he forgot his rouge."

Bob and Mrs. Ferris took to each other instantly. Bob got on swell with all the mothers; he was nice-looking and he flirted with them. Tommie stood in the offing, it was Bob's play. Tommie didn't have a chance to have his say, as Mrs. Ferris left at once.

She said, "I know how anxious you boys are to have me around. Be careful you don't forget to have a good time."

Tommie said, "Leave that to me."

They started the victrola, and Bob danced with Betty. Tommie said he didn't feel like it. Bob said, "What did you say to leave to you?" Tommie got up and did his best, but he looked funny. Bob got a lot of fun out of this. He kidded Tommie, and he managed to make Helen feel that she was in on the laugh. They

were all together laughing at Tommie, and it was very funny.

When Tommie left Helen Bob was obliged to leave Betty. Tommie flirted with Betty and grumbled to himself about being tired of filling out parties so that Bob could have all the fun. Betty treated him kindly; she was watching Bob with Helen. Bob was very sociable dancing with Helen. Tommie stuck by Betty when the record ended, and Bob came over.

He said, "For Christ's sake, Tommie, can't you tend to your own girl a while? Don't you know any better than to leave your girl stranded? Be nice about it."

Tommie said, "Don't rush me, big boy. Leave me be. I'm doing things my own way."

Bob said, "Well, a little speed, old war horse, get your steed up to gallop."

Helen paid no attention to their talk. She knew Tommie wasn't right for her, but she was satisfied to have him around so she could be in with the other girls on the gossip about parties and boys.

After that Bob tried to get away from Helen and Tommie, hoping they'd take care of themselves. He got Betty off to a chair in the hall where it wasn't as bright. They sat and cooed, and Bob's tired body felt worthy of the attention which Betty gave him. This was the reward of playing football, to have your girl care for the bruises, and to feel them aching but not hurting.

Tommie and Helen followed them. They said, "What are you two doing out here?"

Bob said, "Catching polar bears. Why don't you two find a nice place in the attic and make yourselves comfortable? You walk around too much, Tommie, you'll get fallen arches."

But the two took seats on separate parts of the floor and stayed on. Tommie began talking about the game. Bob and Betty got up and went back into the living room. The two followed them.

Bob said, "Are you two trying to be our shadows? That's a good place out there that

I've found for you, why don't you stay there? Sit down, Tommie, you look bigger."

Tommie said, "Why aren't you two sociable? You're so gone on each other you can't give a minute to anybody else."

Bob said, "You're so sociable, Tommie, you don't know when to take care of yourself. You walk around like a lost lamb. Find a home and park. What's the matter, haven't you ever tried to amuse yourself?"

"You've got me wrong there, Bradley," Tommie said very dignified. "When I get out in a social gathering I expect to behave myself as a gentleman would. And, furthermore, you want me to let you get away with the touchdown. The hell with you, you had your touchdowns this afternoon. I'm going to leave."

Tommie turned and expressed his sincere regrets to Miss Ferris at being obliged to leave and went to the hall to get his clothes. Bob got hold of him and said, "What the hell's the matter with you? Can't you take a joke? You're crabbing the works. What's the idea? I'll be

going right away now, anyway. Wait a minute, and we'll go along together."

Tommie said, "No, I got to go, Bob. I got to go along now. There's no point in my staying here. I'm going along."

Bob went in and told Betty he didn't know what had struck Tommie. He said, "You never can tell about those foreign temperaments."

While they were talking Tommie was expressing his feelings; he was taking plenty of time to fix his scarf and smooth his hair, and fix his overcoat. He said, "Come on now, if you're coming, Bob."

Bob came out and got his coat, but he wasn't hurrying. He was talking to Betty, and he was kidding Helen, while Tommie waited at the door without a word out of him. They walked the first hundred yards without talking.

Then Bob said, "What in the devil struck you to get so sore all of a sudden, Tommie? You're a fine little playmate. You've put yourself out of a nice place to keep warm these winter nights."

Tommie said, "I don't mind going on a party to help you out, but you had no right to rub it in the way you did. I can take a dirty deal on a party, but I don't like to have everybody tell me about it. You didn't have to say I didn't know how to take care of myself just because I had that big biddy to haul into port. You know what I mean, a fellow's sensitive to things like that."

Bob said, "Oh, hell, Tommie, you go off on your high horse over nothing. Can't you take a little fooling? I was just having a little fun to cheer things along a bit, and here you go and help me out by leaving the show. You weren't being kidded, anyway. Helen was the only one who was getting a razz."

But Tommie didn't believe him. It had happened this way before; Bob always said he was kidding someone else. He didn't answer, and Bob went on to tell him how funny Helen looked next to him, Tommie.

Bob said as they were separating, "I'll see you in school to-morrow. Maybe we can get

a date with a couple of good ones to-morrow night. I'll try to get Betty and Ellen."

Tommie knew he wouldn't. If Ellen could go to Betty's house Bob would get Bunny Harlow, because she and Bunny were together quite a bit lately. And if Bob were invited to any other party he'd go to it and forget about the date he had planned with Tommie. Or Bob might stay at home and drop in to play with Mary Winter, the girl next door. If there was a chance for him to see Betty only with Helen or some other no-business, he'd call up Tommie to get him to come along. And Tommie would go.

A NEW GIRL

A NEW GIRL

FRIDAY night Don got out of the factory promptly after the whistle blew. He was the first up the long Wilson Street hill, his coat slung over his shoulder. Grease had caked on the shoes he wore, even after only a single week of being in the factory. His pants were grimy, and his shirt had a long grease strip from shoulder to tail. One after another of his good shirts was going to the rag bag for lack of the proper working shirts. He went to work in the morning as a dude, a clean shirt and shoes shined, and came back in the night ready for the rag bag.

The afternoon was going on the hill. The sun's light and heat were fading on the pavement and slowly drawing up into the wooded

western hills in front of him. On the porches the women were sitting, getting the last benefits, the best part of the day, when the sun is cool enough to leave some comfort, sitting in their rocking chairs with their clean aprons on. He spoke as he went by, doing his blarney best about the heat in the factory and the health of the family.

Behind him, toiling up the hill, were more greasy figures, giving each other the news of the evening. Don maintained his lead to the house.

His mother was on the porch, talking across the lawn to Mrs. McManus. He said, "Ma, I've got to have my dinner by half-past six. I've got to get downtown by seven to meet Tommie."

He passed her and went in the side door. She said, "Oh, my Lord, another of those dances to-night, I guess, Mrs. McManus."

"They're always at it, going some place, aren't they?" said Mrs. McManus.

"Yes, sure, if it isn't one thing, it's another."

Don knocked at the window behind her. "Come on, Ma, come on. Don't waste all the time."

"Oh, you needn't be in such a wild rush. No one will be any the worse if you're late a few minutes. I've seen you waiting around so that you might get there late."

"Don't worry about that now. Get the supper."

In his own room he ripped off his labor uniform, flinging the items one onto another in the closet, shoes, hat, and all. He started the water in the tub, then worked on his hands with Grit. When he had come out of the tub and had shaved and powdered he was a new man. He wore a new suit, with university stripes, recently pressed, and with trousers hung as he liked them, clinging to the shoe tops and the crease setting exactly in the middle. He went down to eat in his shirt sleeves, no tie on, his head in a stocking cap to hold his hair in place.

"Well, this is one of those big parties," his

mother said. "You're wearing your new suit. Who's your girl friend to this one, or is that a question a mother shouldn't ask?"

"Oh, Mother, what difference does it make? One's as good as another around this dump. If you see any raving beauties, let me know. The girls around here are all stale."

"Oh, that's how it is right now. You've been going over to Mary Leicester's house about three times a week lately, but I suppose that has nothing to do with whom you take to the dance."

"If it'll do you any good, I'm not going to take Mary, but I'm going with a girl friend of hers, a cousin who's just come from Cleveland."

"I guess the girls around town haven't got a chance in a million to-night with a girl here from Cleveland."

"She looks pretty good in a picture, but you can't tell, she may be like the other balmy pals that Mary's got."

He had his supper, talked to Tommie over the 'phone, and sank down in the armchair near the window, looking by turns at the street and the evening newspaper.

His mother was hoping to resume her digestion of the news of the day. "So this is the way you rush to get downtown at seven," she said.

"Mother, you don't know how my bones ache after that shop. Man, I'm tired."

"You ought to stay home and go to bed, get some rest for yourself instead of trotting out to this fool dance to-night."

"Oh, don't start that."

Yawning, he dragged himself up. He finished his dressing carefully, in his own room. He went out and cut a rose from a bush in the back yard.

"Leave the side door key behind the blind. I won't be late. You go to sleep and don't worry. Listen, leave some cake in the cupboard, will you?"

"I wonder what's keeping your father," she

said. "Now, Donald, no one or two o'clock in the morning. You've got to be up at six to-morrow morning and down to your job."

"I'll be there all right."

He went down the street whistling, stopping to talk to his father, who was coming home at his ease, gossiping with his old cronies. The father just said, "Another dance to-night?" When he acknowledged that, that's all there was to it, and he was on his way.

Tommie was sitting on the shine stand when he arrived at their meeting place on Main Street. A gang of fellows were collected in front of this shoe and shine store, the usual gang of factory workers, wops and dagoes. He said his helloes gruffly, and overheard the remark, "Boy, it's wonderful what a little less foundry grease will do for a fellow."

Tommie said, "Going to have a shine, Don? I'm all through, but I can wait. We ought to be there early, though. Mary called up the house. Told me to be sure to be there early."

"Yeah, she's a fine one to be talking about

hurrying. I'll bet we'll be waiting for her a few hours while she's getting her mug fixed up to suit her."

Don climbed on the shine stand. Tommie opened his coat, put his hands in his pockets *in front* of the sides of the coat, and paced the store, observing his shoe shine and the looks from the outside gang.

"Many of the alumni going to be there, Don?"

"Don't try to talk big, Tommie. This dance is no different from any of the rest of them."

"I've got the old man's car. Mary's got a new evening dress."

"Well, the same old priscillas will be there."

Don got down from the stand, put his hands in his pockets *from the side,* wrinkling the sides of the coat. He paid the man. They crossed the street to the car, which Tommie had gotten out of the old man for the first time.

"You ought to have this bus out more, Tommie. You could have some good parties."

"The old man says he may let me have it

sometimes after to-night. It all depends on how things go to-night."

Mary's house was on the ridge overlooking the river, in the wealthy district. It was an old brick building on a corner made by the thoroughfare and a small alley which went to the edge of the ridge. A driveway from the alley went behind the house to an old barn, built in the horse-drawn days. It was not used by the family, but Mary and her girl friends had a playhouse in the hay loft. Mary's little brother jumped from the hay doors to the ground just to show he was not suffering from too much girl company.

As they rang the doorbell they could spy a feminine head watching from behind a curtain of the house on the opposite corner. Mary herself poked her knob out of a window above them. "Go on in and sit down," she crew, "we'll be down right away. I'll send Mother down."

"Man oh Moses, leave Mother upstairs out of the way. We can get on well enough without her. Get down yourself, that's all we want."

Tommie sat down quietly near the piano. Don walked around the sitting room, looking at the antique wall pictures, watching the light scintillate in the cut glass.

Mary scudded down the stairway and into the room. "My, but you boys are early. We'll open the hall if we start now."

She walked over to Don with long steps, poising each step on the balls of her feet, her body vibrating at right angles to the line of travel, and gave him a kiss.

"Got a new girl for you to-night, Don. See if you can't like her."

"Well, go back and get dressed, Mary. We've got to get to this dance to-night, you know. You'd better get going, because you're just about as quick as a one-legged sprinter."

"Oh, you're horrid to-night."

A voice called, "Mary, Mary, come on back now. The boys can get along without you for a while." The voice was cooing and quiet. It was Mrs. Leicester's.

Don stepped out to the foot of the stairs. He said, "How do you do, Mrs. Leicester?"

"How do you do, Donald? Why, you don't look a bit like a working man."

"You should see me during the day, or at six, coming home."

Going up the stairs, Mary was saying, "But, Mother, someone must entertain them. You can't leave them to stare at the walls of the parlor, especially that one."

"Why, Mary! Mary's such a skip-about that it's a task for the angels to get her dressed. Go back in there, you wretch."

Tommie had come out to say his greetings, and he followed Don back into the parlor.

"God," said Don, "we can expect to be kept waiting a good part of the night for that girl."

Through the help of Mother and the influence of Miriam Mary got down sooner than was expected. She came galloping down the stairway, a single gurgle being held from top to bottom. Mrs. Leicester and Miriam followed at the normal gait.

Miriam was all the quieter and smoother in contrast to her bouncing cousin. She was about Don's size, and she moved with her body continually well balanced, with the ease of movement of a professional ballroom dancer. Her light blonde hair brightened a face which was without a smile and with a smooth creamy skin. Her legs were as good as they come, except that they seemed adapted only for the careful balance.

Mrs. Leicester did the introductions, giving the life histories which seemed necessary.

Mary interrupted, "Oh, Mother, don't go on. It'll do them no good to know. They know each other now, don't you Miriam, don't you, Don?"

Don had watched Miriam carefully. Her legs were the focal point, though that delicate soft gold hair was an eyeful. Under his breath he said, "Gee, she's a wow." Tommie's eyes were popping.

Mrs. Leicester took a seat at one end of the room. "Now let me have a good look at all of

you together before you leave. I'd love to have a picture taken of you now, so young and so attractive."

Mary said, "Oh, lay off, Mother, don't get sappy. The only good-looking one is Miriam. Don's not so good-looking even if he is impressive."

Don said, "A picture of you going to your first dance, Mrs. Leicester, would put us all to shame."

Mrs. Leicester was a small lady, white haired. She blushed for the compliment. Her manners were so much of bows and of this long gone courtliness that Don, for the most part, couldn't keep pace. This was his fastest feeding.

Mary said, "Well, let's get going. We might as well be there as long as we're all shined up."

Miriam was getting in the good looks at Don while his attention was distracted to Mrs. Leicester. He stood next her in this picture group of young loveliness dear to the heart of a mother. Then her eyes were cast down as if she were shy. She was dressed in a pure white

silk dress and looked something like the snow queen.

It was hardly worth the trouble of starting the car, to drive the short distance to the hall. Mary insisted that it was necessary to arrive in a car. Tommie wanted to drive up. Guided by Mary's burbles far in the lead they went along the stairways of the building to a hallway set aside as a cloakroom. Mary's wrap was falling from one shoulder. Her walk had in it more energy than is girlish. Down through the stairways came other giggles and a confused chattering noise.

Don was close to Miriam on the drive over. He held her arm going through these darker stairways. She shied more from the dark than from him. He was giving her the lay of the land, a general picture of the sacrifices and efforts made to get to this affair. "Some of these big boys and girls haven't been out after nine since the last one of these," he said.

"Oh, I'll bet it'll be odd," she said.

She left him at the hallway entrance but

turned back for other looks on her way down the hallway to the girls' cloakroom. He was watching her closely, evidently well on his way under.

When he came out after having checked his clothes Mary was in the hallway waiting for him, and in her neighborhood were all the kids he knew, waiting to trade dances.

"We must get Miriam all the best dancers, Don. I'm so anxious for her to like it here."

"Yes, but where are they? Wait a minute, wait a minute. Give me time to figure it out."

The kids crowded around. He wrote down: John Zabrisko, Harold Ames, George Herring, Bob Weiner, Tony Genetto, Tim Murphy. He got some bad dances in the break. Some of their partners needed the real boloney, because he'd been giving them the air at all the local dances.

"Holy Mary," he said to Tony, "why did you ever bring that? You're not trying to pass that off on me. Go along and lay down."

The music for the first dance came down over

the stairway. The boys and their fraus were clustered together in the hallway, eager to be on the floor, but not to break the ice. A general pushing went on in order to push someone out.

"Go on, Tony," Don said, "you ought to be out there. You're an old-timer. Show them how it's done."

"Oh, the hell," said Tony, "leave me alone. Don't push me. I'll be out there when everything is right. This is the overture number, anyway."

Tony got out on the next number, which was more like something meant for dancing. His coat tails spread across his back, showing his shirt, and one of his bell-bottom pants legs had twisted and had caught up on his leg, showing a flash of purple garter.

"That-a-boy, Tony, you'll show them," Don said.

When Don and Miriam started, there was something that everyone held their breaths for. They were a matched dancing pair, the turns and frills being done with feet that move with-

out notice of the head or eyes. Don didn't do any tricky steps, but his bearing attracted the eyes of all the others. He was telling her in his comic voice more about the dance and the deadheads.

"Take a look around you at all the daisies I've got to cart around while they go one, two, three four skip. No, they won't practise at home. They wait till I get my new shoes on."

When they were sitting, boys came skating across the floor for dances. "Joseph, no," he said, "I've got too many guys like you on my programme now. Go over to Tommie. He's your size. Don't bother me."

The hall was almost exclusively filled with these little flies with their patent-leather shoes and hair part and their new blue serge suits. The partners left sitting alone switched at dresses, pulling them over the knees, and watching for something which showed without their knowing it.

After dancing with one of the infants, Don got Tommie out on the fire escape, and they

each had a nip from a pocket flask. After a few they returned, flushed in the face, and with a breath a little more life-savering than nipping. Miriam noticed the life-saver breath, but the flush was puzzling.

She said, "Don, don't leave me alone so much."

"You've got these protectors all around you."

"Oh, shush."

By intermission the prevailing atmosphere of these small bugs began to be relieved by the arrival of a stag group, much older, and too nonchalant to be bothered bringing girls. Some were alumni on vacation from college, marked as select by Tuxedos and a particular kind of collar and black bow. They made an oasis in one corner, talking of exams, class cuts, baseball teams, and New York shows. Miriam was spied immediately, but Don turned them down on dances.

Bob Kaiser started the cutting on her first dance after intermission. This became a habit,

no dance being complete without two or more cut-ins.

Don was left in the cold. He couldn't get near her. She was flung from one Tuxedo to another; the young boys on her programme didn't stand a chance. He spent his time on the fire escape, nipping from the flask with or without company.

"I tell you, Irv," he said to one of the boys in town who had just come in to look on, "it's no good to bring a girl to one of these dances; you only get gypped all the more."

"You've got to expect it, Don, when you bring something as nice as you have here tonight. That kid's got the goods and she'll go big in any company. You can't expect to hog her for yourself."

"It doesn't do me any good, Irv. I tell you, Irv, these fellows are pretty big-headed about it, anyway. You'd think they'd give me a show once in a while. They don't even know that I've brought her."

"They've been away, Don, and seen big

things. The old town looks pretty small to them coming back, you can bet on that. This is the way they've been doing it out of town, and they've forgotten how things go in the hick burgs. You'd probably be the same after you'd gotten away a few years."

"Yeah. Well, I'm going to bust one of them on the nose."

He walked across the floor, wavering a little, for his dance with Mary. Miriam rushed out to him from the black belt circumscribing her.

"Don, where have you been? You ought to have another dance with me."

Irv watched him cool off as he looked into those blue eyes, and the golden head came to rest on his shoulder. The night was settled for him, since the dance was ending. Now came the good innings for the lads who had brought the janes and were taking them home. Don was a proud kid, but he certainly had his way with girls.

ON THE RIVER

ON THE RIVER

SATURDAY was a hot quiet day. In the cool of the morning the sun was ready for the blaze of the day. As the kids woke up in their shack, the floor boards were a little warm, just from the slight amount of sun heat which had come through the trees behind the shack.

The shack stood off the side of a steep river bank, the river side of it supported on a pair of stilts, and the back resting on the side of the hill. There was a stairway from it down to a short dock dipping into the water, where a row-boat and a canoe were held. A lean-to in the back held a kerosene stove and the cooking equipment. The shack itself had two rooms, one with the bunks and one with the card table.

Eddie got up when the sun had blazed on

his eyes in every position he could turn to. He slid into his pants and shirt, and went into the lean-to to coax the kerosene burners into action; he had a loving way with them. Don and Bob couldn't work them. Eddie did all the cooking. On his way out for the water Eddie gave each of the two cots a couple of bounces off the floor.

Don said, "Lay off, Eddie, lay off. I'm going to get up."

Bob grumbled in his slumber and rolled into his blanket.

Don stretched and yawned and walked in his blanket out on the porch, taking a look at the weather.

He said, "It's a fine one, Bob. Come on, roll out."

Bob was putting on weight. He needed sleep.

Don took a flying leap, landed square on him, and rolled onto the floor with him. Bob pawed around in the air seeking a hold, his eyes opening only for blinks.

"Aw, cut it out," he said, "hey, cut it out."

Don let him lie, covering him with the two blankets, got into his clothes, and went into the kitchen ready for eating as Eddie came down the path from the spring, hollering to people he saw.

Don yelled, "Come on, Eddie, I'm hungry."

The kids had been lucky in having families willing to let them stay on the river. They had rented the shack for a little money, and they were getting better than a fair return. Otherwise they'd have been playing pool in the afternoons, hanging around Main Street nights, aching for some place to go.

When Eddie got the coffee going, so that the smell was in the bunkroom, Bob's eyes really opened, and he came on back for his nip of coffee before breakfast. Don was eating as fast as Eddie would serve. Breakfast was the best meal they had. Eddie wasn't as hot on cooking meats as he was on griddle cakes.

It was already about ten o'clock. They could hear the guys at the Alpha Sigma Pi shack next

door cleaning up the joint. The Alphas were to be there in full force over the week-end.

Bluff Hare stood in the door of the kitchen and said, "Hey, kids, we're going to have to pack a few guys in here to-night. There won't be room for them at the shack. We'll bring over a couple of cots."

Eddie said, "Is that so? Where do we get off? Where do we get off, hey?"

Bluff said, "Don't crab, kid. Nobody'll hurt you."

Don said, "That's all right. We don't mind, Bluff. Eddie's talking out of turn."

Don was aiming to make the Alphas.

Bob said, "Sure, we don't mind."

Eddie was sore because the Alphas were too damn select. Eddie was a bright boy in school, and the Alphas didn't take notice of that. They watched the socially select.

Eddie crabbed the Alphas while the three of them were taking the canoe down to the girls'. These two, Gladys and Violet Dean, were the only two on the river during the week

who were any good. Don made a big play for Violet, Eddie usually took Gladys, and Bob got in his mugs when they weren't working. Bob was content to lie around the shack reading Dick Merriwell stories.

As they got to the dock they saw the girls leaving, going down to meet the old man at the end of the river car line.

Don said, "Damn it, I knew we'd miss them with all your crabbing, Eddie. Why don't you lay off and push on that paddle some of the time?"

"What do you care? You'll see them at the dance to-night. Where are you going now?"

"Turn around and go back."

"Why don't we go down the river a ways?"

"What good is that going to do you? Come on, pull on your oar, man."

Don wanted to be back at the shack so as to be able to work in on what the Alphas did.

The week-enders began to get to the Alphas' shack at two in the afternoon. The first group that came brought a gallon jug of wine, which

was hung into the spring, held half out of the water. A couple more jugs came later; all the boys were well loaded with liquids to kill the taste of the river water.

They spent the afternoon swimming, and Don wandered over to their dock. Eddie kept to his own dock; he wouldn't have anything to do with the birds. Bob spent the time warming in the sun, lying on his belly on the end of the dock. Don had a good time, swimming, and smoking cigarettes on the dock and on their porch.

Eddie said, "Aw, the hell with the buzzards."

By six the sun was fading. The Alphas were out of bathing suits, preparing supper and drinks. Don was still among them. Bluff Hare yelled to Bob and Eddie to come over. Don signaled them behind his back. Bob ambled over without trouble, and Eddie walked slowly behind him.

On the porch, after Bluff had gone in, Don said, "Wake up, Eddie, you're going to queer us. Can't you see we're the gravy for the night.

no cooking, and we may get a few drinks? Did you see the jugs they ducked into the spring?"

Eddie said, "Well, we ought to get something. We won't owe them anything."

A large porterhouse was cooking over the stove, and in the back, outside, potatoes were baking in a fire. On the table in the main room there were a couple of big cakes and bags of fruit. The kitchen table was loaded with bags of stuff, supplied by all the good mothers and sisters. Two guys were slicing long loaves of regular bread and round loaves of Italian bread.

Eddie went into the kitchen and took a look at their kerosene stove. Decker Beard was cooking the steak on it. Decker was clad in a butcher's apron, knickers, and undershirt, and high shoes which were untied. His legs were bare. The steak was sizzling in its own juice, and in butter.

Decker said, "Did you ever cook, kid?"

"Sure, I do the cooking in our shack. But I haven't tried anything hard."

"A steak like this is the thing for the river, especially on a night like this when you expect to put liquor inside you. You know, kid, a steak like this is the best thing in the world to start drinking on. Soaks up the liquor."

"What's the good of that?" Eddie said. "You don't get the full effect. You waste the liquor that way."

"You don't drink, do you, kid?"

"Well, I do when I get it."

"You'd better stay away from it. You're too smart to be taking liquor. I've been in New York a few years now, and I've seen what liquor can do. I've seen fellows on the Bowery, with all they owned on their back, and I'm telling you it wasn't much. You think they've been that way all their lives? Don't fool yourself. Some of those boys have been college professors, able to talk to you on any subject you bring up. But the booze got them; they couldn't keep away from it."

"Yes, they drank to excess. Of course liquor will do anybody harm if taken to excess.

But what's the matter with it otherwise? You don't have to drink like that."

"That's what they all say when they're starting out. They know when to stop. Sure they do. They just can't lay off the stuff after a while. It gets into their blood. They want to be drunk and be drunk quick, just like you were saying a few minutes ago."

"I can't be a bum. I can't get anything."

"Take my advice, kid, and always have something in you to steady you. Did you every try olive oil? About an eighth of a tumbler is enough."

The steak was finished while they were talking, and Decker had it off the stove and on the plates in no time. The jugs were back from the spring, and wine was being poured for all concerned. The gang was taking them down with ease.

Decker was cautioning all to wait until they had some of his good steak down before they went heavy on the liquor. He handed Eddie a big steak sandwich. Don got into some of

the bags on the kitchen table for a couple of chicken sandwiches, sweet pickles, apples, and doughnuts. The gang was more interested in drinking than in eating. Don was taking the opportunity of filling the lacks due to Eddie's cooking. Bob was eating his way into the center of one of the large cakes.

Bluff Hare brought Eddie a drink. He said, "You're going to the dance to-night, aren't you? Well, you'd better have a little drink; you'll need it to keep in fighting spirit for some of the Liths you're going to dance with."

Eddie took it from him without a word. He drank it down bottoms up. Bob and Don were drinking theirs slowly.

Bob yelled, "Hey, Eddie, take it easy. You're not used to drinking this stuff."

Eddie said, "Oh, this isn't so strong. It's about the same as drinking lemonade, if you ask me."

Decker said, "Well, you've got a little steak in you. Wait until it hits you. This stuff

has got a mule in it, boy. It'll drive you into the middle of next week."

The gallon jug was left in the kitchen. Eddie dug a potato out of its black coat, soaked it in butter, and quietly poured another drink. He poured it down as fast as he had the first one. He blinked while he did it, but he watched his chance to fill his glass again.

In the other room the wine gurgled from the other jugs. Decker came back to cook another steak. He stood there chewing on a huge piece of the one he had cooked, the meat sticking from between slices of the Italian bread, dripping brown with the juice. Eddie stood against the wall, watching the kerosene burners.

The moon was coming up now. The launch went by, crowded with a gang from town coming to the dance. There was a dim hum in the air, coming from cars moving on the river road, the other side of the river.

They lighted kerosene lamps. In one room

a card game started. The potato bakers had cooked enough, and their fire was dying in its embers. Decker's second steak was his last. The gang was well on the way.

Eddie got to two more drinks. Don and Bob were right behind him, tipping the jug. His eyes were fixed in a stare, and he didn't walk well. Don came beside him and put an arm on his shoulder.

He said, "Gee, Eddie, this stuff has got a kick in it, hasn't it?"

Eddie said, "Well, it's got more than I thought, after the first drink. A couple more and it might begin to bother me."

"You mean to say you don't feel it now?"

"Yes, I feel it. A little. I guess I'll get another."

His steps were wavering as he crossed to the jug. Some wine spilled into the doughnut bag. He drank this one slowly.

Decker came back in time to see him finishing. "Say, kid," he said, "you've had about enough."

"Aw, I don't feel it. I'm all right."

The music of the opening dance numbers came down from the Pavilion. The launch went by with another boatload.

Eddie said, "We've got to get going to that dance. That music is pretty good. Come on, Don, let's go on up. Let's go."

Don followed him out of the shack toward their own dock. Eddie slid down half the length of the river bank, stopping at the edge of the water, laughing all the time.

"Try that, Don. That's good. That's funny sliding. I'll do it again."

He got up the bank on his hands and knees and slid full length to the dock. Don trailed him. As they were pushing off in the canoe, Bluff yelled to them from the porch.

"Hey, you guys, going to play hog and go over alone? Take a few more with you, will you?"

Don, in the steering position, turned the canoe toward the Alpha dock.

Eddie said, "We've got to go, Don. We've

got to get moving. We can't wait for those guys."

The gang came down to the dock as Don was bringing it in. Two fellows waited on the shore to go in the canoe. Eddie got out to haul it in, and when the two fellows were in he shoved off with a big heave and stayed on shore himself.

"Go on, Don. Take them away. I'm going to stay here. Can't be doing everything for those guys."

Then he dashed up the hill.

Don let the boat drift. He said, "What do you think I ought to do? Do you think he'll be all right?"

"He'll be all right. He'll go home and sleep."

Eddie stopped on the crest of the bank. "That stuff has certainly got a kick in it. I'm feeling it now. I feel wobbly."

It was a very clear night. The stars were bright and clear, and the sky was smooth, bright black. There were star sparkles washing up to shore with the traveling waves. Up the river

the Pavilion shone in lights. White figures were moving on the edge of the water in front of it, boys in white ducks arriving to dance. The music was mingled with sound of the water on the rocks of the shore.

Eddie slid down to the sod and lay there. "Damn those Alphas," he said. "Maybe I'm drunk, I guess."

SHORE WAYS

SHORE WAYS

JIM, Jack, and Bill wanted a hell of a good time Labor Day. They wanted to be rough; their work during the week wasn't any aid to staying in the town during the week-end; they wanted to blow out and blow up the town. They jumped down to the roughest beach they knew of, prepared for a rough and tumble. Bill wore flannels and a sweater; Jack, knickers, and Jim, corduroys and sneakers. They felt free of their clothes, their excursion promised all they had thought about during the week.

Getting settled was a tough time. All the cottages had been taken a month back, and the holiday crowd was spreading into the rooming houses. They toted their little boston bag with its precious cargo all over the beach till

they came upon a place they liked. Their choice fixed between a small, nice room—ocean air, light, comfort, screened—and a very large room with makeshift holiday accommodations: the beds had no mattresses, and springs which were rotten and humpy. Jim talked it over carefully with the landlady. Jack wanted the comfort, Bill wanted the fun of suffering for his fun. The big room was cheaper, so they took it. Jim began figuring out ways to use it. He got around the landlady, telling her how to turn it into a tea room, estimating the cost of lumber, and she, poor worried, scheming old lady, put a phonograph into their new little home.

So they began pushing things around. Here was a great big space with cupboards at one end and a screen around their beds. A porch and an ocean stood in front. They examined all the cupboards before stowing their baggage and the bottle of Scotch in a place so out-of-the-way that Jim nearly dislocated his shoulder getting it there.

It was a very nice dusk when they went out to eat. There wasn't a place to really eat in, and they didn't care much about eating anyway. So they grabbed sandwiches, coffee, and that stuff at a lunch stand, then went to look for girls. Bill and Jim had been here before and knew a whole gang of fellows, besides having prior rights on a few girls. Jack didn't know anyone. This was all new to him. He looked and listened without stopping. "By God," he said to Bill, "let's burn up in this hell hole. This is good. By God!"

They couldn't find their girls. They stopped to joke with others. This was easy. Bill had the dope on it. He walked up to them and said, "Where you going, kid?" The girls tittered and smiled and spoke archly.

The people were beginning to come out for the night. They walked back through a gathering jam. Bill was all tuned; he had his fun being somebody by laughing at the others. Jim was seriously involved in his plans for a good party. He looked the girls over carefully; he

hardly heard Bill's quips. Jack was still shy in the new atmosphere, requiring its careful attention to his hidden superiorities.

Sitting on the bed each took a few shots of Scotch from the bottle. It was moonshine stuff and bit like hell. Jim tested it by lighting some with a match. When it flared, Jack laughed, thinking of the movie trick where the sloppy guy with moustaches spits it on the sidewalk to make it burn and explode. Jim was urging them to drink so that they might feel right and set for the dance that night, but the liquor burning up that way kind of put them off it. They finished about a third of the bottle. Every time Jim took a drink he grimaced, contorting his face horribly, cursing and swearing it was awful stuff. But he wanted to get drunk so badly, in order to carry out his plans, that he kept right on drinking. Bill and Jack rolled, laughing, on the bed and floor as he cursed and took another drink. He stopped only when he realized that they would need some for the girls, after the dance.

There wasn't any hot water and only a little soap. They couldn't get very clean. Jack jumped upstairs to shave at the landlady's kitchen sink by the light of a kerosene lamp. He could hear Bill kidding and Jim flattering a bunch of girls who had just arrived. It was a quick get-together. Jim was an arranger, fixed the girls for dances that night, dated them up for after the dance, the idea being that they'd be sure of something. They were going to have one glorious fine time in forgetting their habits of conduct. The girls fussed, kidded, and fooled around for some time. Bill razzed the poor dears badly. They seemed to like it.

The dance hall projected out into the sea on a footwork of piles. Music from it sounded distance-soft through all the beach. Jack rushed the other two along to get to it. It was packed, being the only amusement the young liked. Sexes were evenly present, no wallflowers. All this uproar and hubbub made a good democratic condition. Boys and girls had come from different towns, were mostly unacquainted, and

were able only to use their eyes and hands and ears to select partners. This was a free hunting ground. A red-hot band started them off hunting.

The boys separated when they got in, foraging each alone. Jack shot off a line about shows, actresses, and scandal to the partners he talked to. This got the frailer, uncertain ones; tough ones thought him upstage and recognized an alien. Bill was proficient, he hopped right on them and drove them under his will, making them feel inferior, always wanting to fight. If they didn't talk he'd say, "Don't you ever say anything or are you just naturally dumb?" Their defensive tactics became part of his offense. They had to prove *they* were good enough for him. Jim was kind of sentimental: as befitting the consummation of his plans, he talked flattering to them, asked loads of personal intimate questions. Many of them liked him, he was nice, kind looking, and he talked on their ground about things they knew about and had opinions on. He was always practical,

knowing the prominent streets and buildings of their town, and other informational items they thought impersonal and important. These were what they knew about; they forgot their scares.

Jim was attached to and shared with these girls; they were going his way. Bill and Jack wanted their girls rebellious. They had been shaken loose from the things the people they knew best held onto; and they wanted to hold hands. A girl full of hates was the one who might jump to them in a moment of being together. They looked for the bright slim girls who were pretty and poor; they'd be nice to kiss, and they wouldn't know enough other girls to have picked up their defences. These would be the kind of girl who went to the movies to dream on Lillian Gish dying in Limehouse. Only a lucky break could rush them into a girl like this. Bill got sore after a while, he stood alone in a corner, cursing stupidity and rats, ants, dagoes, wops, hunks, dopes, conies. Jack fastened onto one he could talk to grandiosely

and cute. Her eyes shone when he talked sedately in college English about scandalous topics like girls not wearing petticoats and the intricacies of her wardrobe. Some of her boy friends looked leanly at this gink who kept on talking his feminine-persuading. She didn't believe him, but it was good music; she didn't miss a gesture, dear boy.

It was pouring hot while dancing; all the boys had their shirts open at the collar. Jim found Jack and dragged him away from his queen. The dance was ending, Jim wanted the evening wild and was concerned only with finding three together. Bill was willing to join a party but wouldn't budge from his corner to go look. He and Jim got into a hot argument over this. Jack took two rebuffs while it went on. When they finished the dance was disbanding, all the good ones attached, many of the bimbs so sassy and selective that they ended by taking their sure thing—the girls from the house—back to the house.

They sat on the porch outside their big room,

the girls in their laps. Jim started operations in an earnest way. Jack was tired, he sang in a pale pretty voice—"You were meant for me and I was meant for you"—thinking of Gertrude Lawrence's stunning legs, rocking the chair, not minding the oppressive and compressive female so dispassionate. Soon he got up and walked along the water's edge, watching black marching fronts. It was softly quiet with only the waves noising in. Oh, angel, there must be something. Bill could be heard silencing objections to his onslaught. Jim managed to slip his girl inside their big room, but they were all glad when the girls left.

Jack was subdued. He laid out on the bed, pretending to sleep as Bill came looking for his aid in more parties. Bill and Jim went off without him. They couldn't find any girls, but they found a house where everybody was tight. What a racket. From the telling of secret souls and sins. The girls were forgetting to remember, they threw their arms about their fellows. Bill and Jim couldn't get a foothold; when

they tired of looking they went home, taking home Johnnie Rodman, whom they found without a home.

Jack was the first awake, tired and aching from the bulging springs. It was early. Bill and Jim were sleeping soundly beside him. Johnnie Rodman was on the cot. Johnnie's cot had been cushioned by a long rubber mat taken from the floor, and he looked comfortable. Bill and Jim had the carpets beneath them. Some feminines started gabbing while making breakfast in the kitchen on the other side of the partition. Bill and Jim awoke. Jim said, "What the hell are those goddamed women doing at this time of the morning?"—and rolled over trying to sleep.

Bill laughed like hell in a long cackle. Jack joined to be a good fellow. Jim got sore and swore and called them idiots. Bill kept on cackling whenever the women said anything, and called them all the dirty names he knew. When Johnnie awoke he led the fun. He couldn't keep his blanket over his shins. No

one wanted to get up, no one wanted to sleep, they sat and rolled around waiting for something to happen. Jim half wanted to sleep; he growled and grumbled till the horseplay started and turned on him. Beds were demolished, and the boys, angular in B.V.D.'s, got all bumped up on the floor. "Goddam it, hooray, let's go to church."

They washed, but they had no change of clothes, so they felt lowdown scrummy walking out to church. Church was jammed, people were kneeling in the streets. They watched the kneelers while they ate at a lunch stand. Bill hunted for a soft spot to sleep on. Jack and Jim went swimming till noon. The water looked and felt dirty, tasted dirt-salty, filled as it was with the great unwashed. Jim walked along the beach, trying to make dates with the girls.

After lunch they toured, looking for their girl friends. Jim was the driving force; he alone was avid of women, animal in not discriminating among the insides of skirts. He

wanted all that the beach was intended to give him. Bill was tired; his old girls had exhausted his capabilities in their direction. Jack didn't know what he wanted but he couldn't believe it could be here in front of him. It amounted to the same action in all of them; they did what the situation asked them to do. Johnnie was a happy fellow who enjoyed doing everything he did.

They landed in a cottage where Johnnie sang popular ballads while playing the piano; he had a good voice which was employed in all the local minstrels. Jim kept the party excited, singing at the piano, trying to organize a quartet, kidding the girls, passing the conversation about to include everybody. Bill and Jack refused the gambit, joked together, and passed insults intended to be heard—oh, how bored they were. Some wearied guy was there, pretending not to notice them, attending his own girl, keeping out of their little party. This made Bill sore because the guy looked like a factory hand shined for the week-end, out of his class.

He wanted to sock the greaser, and Jack pulled his head in out of the window, where he was flirting with the air, to tell him to sit down. Johnnie and Jack got to the ice box and drank all the ginger ale. There was a turmoil, and Jack and Bill scooted—heading for a snooze in a hammock somewhere.

Jim and Johnnie stayed long enough to drag two of the girls to the house, where Jim committed the treachery of bringing out the remainder of the Scotch. The girls guzzled it without noticeable effect. Bill and Jack came back, no girls, no hammock, no snooze. They snooped around and found their last night's playmates. So they took kodaks and fought manfully with these energetic cowboys till supper time. Johnnie had a date and left, taking the girls with him.

They joined the evening parade as soon as they had eaten. Trolley lines ran through the center of the beach, and *everyone* promenaded on or beside them. It was a job finding three good women together; the three they got were

only fairly attractive. On the way to the house Jim, like a damn fool, steered the party to a drug store for drinks even after Jack and Bill had gotten safely by it. If Jim had expectations a girl could do damn near anything with him.

Their records weren't old enough to be sour, and two of the girls were very good dancers. Bill and Jack did some tricky steps. At first dancing was on the porch, but gradually moved inside the big room as it darkened. Jim had a small pert broad with a neat, bright way, trim, straight legs, slim ankles, her dress girdled at the waist so that her round little buttocks were a bustle for it. The girl Bill had was heavy, with well-formed large breasts, her legs beef, all of her hitting the ground. Her dress hung about her loosely, her face was full and dull, flaccid, placid, not awake. Jack had the real dopey one. She seemed best bet on first sight, so rangy and long, not skimped in any part, movements very free and graceful, features clean but not lit, too vapid. She talked

nasally but not often. She looked good and when he kissed her—in the dark—was very responsive, though peculiar; she was excited but permitted no advances.

For a time Jack feared the landlady's interference. She sat on the porch and could hear everything. Jim and Bill knew she expected this and calmed him. Jack paired with his girl, but he couldn't stick her endurance. He turned her over to Jim who was glad of the chance. Jim's girl was a freeze and she was left in peace. Bill and Jack coupled activity on Bill's girl. They had loads of fun saying, "Here, take her, I'm tired." But this cruelty did not arouse her, and they got tired of passing her back and forth.

She had some use as a pillow when they tried to sleep. She didn't understand these bright boys, apparently so nice, educated, classy, yet so vulgar, so direct and forthright. There were no insults in their conversation for her because she didn't know what they were talking about. She liked Bill because he dominated her. This

helped her to believe their outright nasty talk about her relationships with boys was involved normal kidding. Jack liked her momentarily because she was so *removed*—in her immunity to their attack, the attack shattered on her solidity. Bill saw in a cleaner way and had no emotions involving her. Why feel sorry? None of them *gave* anything. None did anything out of herself to meet the events.

"For Christ's sake, Jim, get through with that bimb and let's go." Jim was a never-say-die. He proposed buying liquor, but no place was open. Bill and Jack felt relieved by this turn because Jim had no money and they had very little. Even when they were walking the girls home, Jim kept on wheedling.

They had hamburger sandwiches at a stand. Bill was expansive, walking along making quips, listening to Jack, very emotional this 2 A.M. about the first movement of the patétique opus, opus, opus, as he said. Jack whistled to imitate an entire symphony orchestra, and Jim showed his sympathy for art, culture, the

full life, and higher things by plangent applause. Bill liked it more when Jack whistled the same themes sour.

"Oh, the marvel and color, Bill, as 110 musicians, you know. Just to see them moving the bows and the whole platform a seething swishing. It's too much for me. You should hear Petroushka, an enormous letup of the entire musical convention."

Bill's girl liked Jack's impressing her with this grand musical enthusiasm. Bill listened to be transferred. The street stood very still in a slow hush; they walked into a vortex.

The pert one went right inside; Bill and Jack were amusing themselves with Bill's girl while waiting for Jim, who had renewed attack on the hot one. They told her all the sly jokes they knew; she told them that she heard better ones at any gathering of girls. But she was surely no vicious female; the jokes went by her and through her and escaped her. So the vile jokes the girls told each other were vileness as attitude and lacked content.

This pastime consumed two hours, and at the end of their supply they walked home, leaving Jim to his hot ways. Bill said, "When Jim gets in a heat you can't get him off the trail. Imagine him not knowing there's nothing doing with that wench. Poor fish, he'll get here to-night all worn out and nothing gained."

"We had some fun talking to Rosa, your erstwhile divinity," Jack said, "if we did get into what couldn't finish us. So ends the pursuit of the rainbow, and our shining dreams—two tough guys tired and sentimental in the quiet dark."

FAIR FLOWERS FORLORN

FAIR FLOWERS FORLORN

DON was sitting with the usual group of guys mid-center of the balcony, leaning back in the seats, and feet on the railing. They dusted off the cigarette ash to fall whither it would and gave an eye around the full semi-oval and along the parallels at its end. The regulars were there, the upper set in the curve near them, and the foreigners squeezed into a small space at the extreme end of the parallel sides, near the stage. It was as if they found their home conditions no matter where they went. But there were two new girls along the side, somewhat foreign, yet in better style. The younger had her eyes open to her surroundings; she leaned forward in her seat, she turned her head within the entire range, she arranged and fussed with

her hair. But the other sat back, and though she looked about did so with a scornful smile which never weakened.

Don said, "Who's that dark girl on the other side? Those two new ones?"

"Some foreigner from the shacks near the railroad. You've seen her before. She's been away for a time, about the last few years, I guess, and she's damned snooty since she got back. You know how these foreigners are when they've had a chance to step out."

"Well, she hasn't got that peasant look."

She was a strange girl. She was a foreigner, but not Pole or Lithuanian like the girls of the other railroad families. She was Russian and Jewish, Russian in the eyes and Jewish in the nose. Her hair was exceptionally dark and thick, her clothes were simple and elegant, and she had an odd slouchy gait. Her eyes were black and shifty, sometimes as if uncontrolled, and they were cynical.

There was a lot of scandal about the family, the Russian father saloon keeper, the mild Jew-

ish mother, and the three sisters all of whom were going away rather than into the spinning mill. The father came home drunk, on the nights he came home, well loaded and as mean as Satan. He cursed his wife in Russian oaths. The neighbors said he beat her. But the daughters said nothing at all but brought their mother from the city jewelry or clothing as she needed them.

The young sister danced with the first boys who asked her, when the game was finished and the floor was cleared. But the older looked too earnest, and the boys stayed away.

Don said, "Doesn't she dance?"

"Sure, but you might as well dance with the Sphinx, all the fun you get out of dancing with her. Well, try it, if you feel like helping the poor working girl."

So he asked her very politely as soon as he got up his nerve.

She said, "Why not, if you don't mind being stepped on a little?"

"You can't do much damage with those small feet."

"Well, Mr. Williams, you may be bright in algebra but you don't know shoe sizes."

"How do you know my name? I've seen you for the first time to-night, and I don't know yours yet."

"Famous people are known far and wide, but how should you know me? I'm nothing, a nobody. Nobody ever hears of me. Just go along and be satisfied that they don't ruin my reputation, for being a nobody. But everybody's heard how smart you are."

Her cynical smile neither diminished nor quickened as she declared herself. Nor was she giving any individual of the dancing mob any special attention. Her indifference was apparently complete.

"You won't have me believe that. I've heard enough about you in a half hour to fill a volume. But what I can't understand is not seeing you even once all these years. We've been in the same town, haven't we?"

"But you don't expect to know me. Never the twain shall meet. We're not the same kind. Just some funny chance made you ask me to dance. But later? Then again I am a nobody. That's easy, isn't it?"

"You talk like a thriller. You've spent your time reading novels when you might have been some place where I could have seen you instead of letting all these years go by."

"You have a different line, at least, but you're no different from the rest. If I lived here the rest of my life you'd never see me again—that is, of course, after you have learned who I truly am."

"Say, I want to see you. Can't I take you home to-night?"

"Why should you waste your time that way? Do you know how beautiful and lovely a walk it is? To me it is all the same, but why should you be so silly?"

"I'll go with you. Now, don't forget."

The two sisters and Don walked down lower Main Street to their house. It was opposite

a railroad crossing, and the saloon was on the ground floor. A long stairway on the crossing side led to the second-story entrance; it rose over a declining slope leading off the street along the railroad tracks. The ground was sandy, but a weak clump of saplings surrounded an old shed in the back yard. This may have been a storehouse at one time, but was now a bare collection of rotting clapboards. Strewn about were a few half-pint and pint bottles, some old beer cases, and a row of beer kegs on their round sides. There was a beery smell.

Climbing over this landscape several times a day was this strange girl, a scandalous nobody.

The younger sister quickly ran up the stairs to leave them together. Marya lounged on the railing at the foot. The street was vacant, and the saloon emitted only an occasional noise.

"I don't want to detain you, but this place is probably wonderfully tempting, anyway."

"It is. It's very strange and interesting. When am I going to see you again? Can it

be soon? I've got to go back to school next week. Will you go to the movies some night?"

"You'll see me on Main Street, and you can ask me then. Wait till you hear the razzing your good friends give you, and the good advice. Perhaps you'll realize that I'm right, that something and nothing don't mix."

"I don't care about what those guys say. I haven't any friends in this town anyway. You don't know so much about me. I'm never here except in vacation times. These guys you saw me with to-night are just acquaintances. Come on, say when."

"Oh, we'll see," she said, and she turned and went up the stairs.

"I'll see you," he said, "if I have to camp on these steps."

"Oh, no, don't do that. Write to me."

She waved before closing the door. There was a kerosene lamp burning in a window, with a wick turned low. This lamp was moved.

Before going to bed Marya always drank hot tea with lemon, in a glass, according to her

Russian custom. It was the mother who took care to have this luxury enjoyed by the daughters, as compensation for the misery produced by the father, the husband it had been her misfortune to marry. And to Marya she was especially loving, since Marya had returned from the city in order to be with the mother when the younger sister went to school. The oldest sister stayed in the city to watch over the younger sister at school. The four women were a mutually protective society.

II

The very next day a letter arrived for Marya, which read:

MA CHERE AMOURETTE:

Is it you from the dreamlands and the clouds and the other worlds whom I at last see actually and not in dreaming? It is the wonder of God's blessing, and his benediction. It is wonderful. I have slept with your handkerchief by my heart, and then and now I know you by its color and its size and its scent. Are you here for a while? Please stay, don't go. I am

struck with seven tongues saying liebchen, dushka, and those other words. Listen, angel and heartbalm, divinity and joy, wonder and full of wonders, wonderful, and know you are something. Yours.

This took her off her base. She was excited. It came on engraved stationery and in a minute handwriting. She read it when it came, before dinner, and over and over again later. Then she slipped out to the post-office branch and wrote on a business postal:

I can't understand your letter. I wish you could have been with me to explain it when it came. Do you truly mean what you have said? Please meet me in front of my house to-morrow night at seven-thirty. Don't fail.

By luck he received it the next morning from the postman and kept it hidden from his mother. But his preparations for going out that night were suspicious.

By three in the afternoon the snow had begun to fall. It was falling in heavy chains of flakes drawn down from the sky. It weighted

the ground without melting, and the sky was overcast, and the branches of trees were broken off. Don watched it from the house, also somewhat overcast.

His mother said, "Regular blizzard to-night, Donald. A good night for you to stay home and get some good rest and sleep. I'll bet your father will be glad to stick to the home fire when he gets here."

He just looked and didn't tell her of his intentions. The snow plow was out at four. The tracks were clear for about fifteen minutes after it passed, but then were indistinguishable from the pavements next them. The trolley cars toiled through their routes with the weight of the snow chains lying heavy on the roofs. It was a pure white snow, and soft, soft and heavy. Marya watched from the office window, her hopes waning with the minutes.

Don had his dinner at half-past five, then began dressing in his best clothes. His mother said, "You're not going out in this blizzard, are you?"

"Oh, Mother, this is no blizzard; it's hardly snowing."

He was trudging down Main Street at seven, having made his way through drifts up to his knees. There were only two guys in the drug store. The people he met were laborers going home late. He walked the few blocks near her house on the opposite side of the street just to get the lay of the land. Her old man might be steamed up and not so damned glad to see someone after his daughter in a blizzard like this. To go up that long flight of stairs might mean a quick and bumpy come-down. He paused opposite it, and in no great hurry crossed to look around. Just as he was going by, something in the way that anybody might be passing, Marya came out from beneath the stairway.

"Oh, you didn't fail me. I was sure a storm like this would keep you at home, or in the drug store with your boy friends."

She stood before him only a minute, when her clothes became whitely shining in the hazy

light coming from the street lamp through that heavy snow curtain. Her eyelids and her cheeks were wetted as the flakes melted. Her eyes were very bright as the result of this moistening, a glossy black, and not as shifty. She looked at him eagerly, and he looked away.

"I was cruising around," he said, "just so I wouldn't be in anybody's way in case they didn't want me to see you. I was just making my plans."

The snow was sliding within their collars and melting down their necks.

"We must get away from here just to be safe. Are we going to the movies?"

"That was a wonderful postal. What made you change your mind? Believe it, I was surprised. I've got it in my pocket. That was swell news."

She pushed him along, and they were out of the visibility of one at the saloon within a few steps. The danger zone was left in walking half a block. Their footprints vanished as they made them. So far as her old man was concerned

they had completely disappeared. The figures of other people could be dimly discerned: a kid running an errand, a woman in a shawl going to the grocery, a man with his dinner pail. The blizzard was sinking upon the town; the town was sinking in the blizzard.

"This is wonderful," he said, "absolutely cut off from everybody. Do you like it? Man, it's dandy."

"It's all right to-night, but they'll be there to-morrow. Of course you can go away and leave them all. But here I am to stay and to stick it. Will you write to me when you're away? Only don't expect me to answer in kind. I can only write the ordinary everyday billet-doux."

"You write very strangely. But you'll have to tell me things, no ordinary chatterbox letters, and none of this nobody stuff. Write like that postal card. That was swell."

She had a kind of low chuckle. And at the movies her usual smile wasn't quite as sour. The flush on her face, the brilliant eyes, and the gleaming black hair, were parts of a

make-up more striking than the vamp in the film. It was almost as if her sorrows were leaving her.

As they went in he scanned the scanty audience, but she kept her looks for herself.

"I suppose you're going to be worrying about the talk that'll get around to-morrow. But you're lost. The die is cast. If any of your regular girls see you with me all you'll get is the air. You haven't any social position after to-night."

"That shows how much you understand me. What do I care about these hens or their cackles? In my judgment there's no social positon in this town anyway. Who's accomplished anything to be proud of?"

"Well, no one worries about your judgment. You're just excited because they aren't on their knees before you."

"I'll be out of their way before long, anyway."

"You're a small-town boy yourself. What have you done to be proud of?"

"Oh, you're an old croaker. You're a frog, that's what you are. Maybe I'm flighty, but it's because I'm in flight, on the fly."

"Beware, then. Frogs eat flies."

The movies were lousy, and she went on like that, just rubbing Don the wrong way. He tried his full repertoire of poses, but she didn't admire a single one. She laughed in a mocking way, with a wandering, indifferent expression.

When they came out the snowfall had stopped. A street car was stalled in front of the theater, and far down the street toward her house was another yellow car resting in its place, in snow to the hubs of the wheels. The crew, a motorman and a conductor, paced about in the snowdrifts, swinging their arms across their chests, clapping their frozen wet gloves to their ears, and cursing out the wrecker.

"You go home from here," Marya said. "It's too far to walk."

"Oh, hell, no. I love to walk in the snow. I'd walk some extra blocks anyway. You need me anyway."

"Who'd take the trouble to bother with a nobody like me?"

A block from the saloon they took shelter in a doorway. Don was a fast worker, and she made no effort to slow him down, except as her indifference spoiled it. She just submitted, and his tempo did not rouse her.

"Do you know Johnnie Jackson? He goes to your school. He's pretty fast. Perhaps he's not as fast as you are, but it doesn't make any difference. You're all about the same."

"I thought you didn't know anybody? Just about everybody but me, I guess."

"You collegians, no one boasts of knowing you. Just one more on your string. There's nothing in that."

"You're too indifferent. You can't appreciate the true nature and force of sex. You haven't got any force. You're just sour."

"You're too young to know about anything. What are you to know, just out of short pants? Wait until you grow up. You'll learn, my duckling."

"I suppose you think I'll learn to be indifferent like you."

"Oh, that wouldn't do you any harm. But you're too conceited to get that way."

"Oh, you don't know anything about me. You've never known anyone like me before."

She laughed in a merry way. He gave up the battle and stood in front of the doorway, looking the street up and down.

She said, "You're a little bit off. Wheels going around in your head. Just because they don't pay any attention to you. But don't worry, it won't last. You'll get used to it and be a nobody too."

"How can the darkness kill the flame? You're the only one around here, except me, that's ever had any fire, and you're burned out. Do you think I'd stay here and smudge up with all this dirt? You don't know what I'm going to be."

"What can you do except talk? What troubles have you had? Well, I've got to go. Can't stay fooling with your conceit."

He tried to stop her. "Why don't you appreciate the only one around that's any good for you? I'm the only one that understands you. You ought to know that."

She laughed again, again very merrily. "I'm going. We'll see each other again. Don't have to do it all now."

She waved a hand, slipped out of the doorway, and ran off, before he adjusted from his far-view to give her notice. She waved a kiss as she went around the edge of the house to the stairway. He hunched his shoulders against the wind and started walking back.

III

He called her every day of that week at her office, but she was either tired or busy or staying home with mother for the night. She'd say, "Why do you bother to call me? I'm no good to you. I'll just make you mad." He returned to school at the end of the week without having seen her again.

The first week he wrote a letter a day and

suffered her letters to come when they might, which was about half as often as his letters were sent. But then her letters began to be dull. And he was finished with the town, anyway. He could space out the week-end scantily, and vacation was far off. The week-ends at home could be used making up on sleep, and he certainly wouldn't need to do anything out there. George Brown was around to the dormitory half the nights, and the two spent the time at town dances, in the movies, on dates, or trailing pickups. The girls he picked up got all the letters.

But Marya was practically isolate, having her mother as her only confidante, and matters very much worse since the younger sister went away to boarding school. She was no prize for a party, and the girls in the office avoided her, since she kept out of their way except when the shoe pinched. She read the books that appeared, but it was very, very dull, and almost too much to suffer for the sake of an unfortunate mother. She read Don's letters as they

came, and more than once afterward, and as they began to thin out she saw the threat of the loss of her only interest.

Just at the end of two weeks, when there had been two days between letters she wrote:

You devil to get me in like this when you know how I am and what I have to suffer here in this prison from which you have escaped. Aren't you coming home soon? At least for a week-end, since there doesn't seem to be any holiday in sight. It's awfully hard to see in this terrible light, and I haven't got a good pen, but probably you'll appreciate the reasons why this must be so. How could I write a letter to *you* from the office? Please come to see me, at least for old times' sake, though I hope you'll have another and better reason.

He wrote on in his usual way, and he didn't answer her. Just some fiddle-faddle about his books or the games or the way things went on in school. As an afterthought, he would end with the explanation that he was working so hard on the mid-years that he just couldn't af-

ford to take the time off for a week-end trip. But the girls in the office couldn't help letting her hear that they had seen Donald Williams coming from the station Saturday night, and that he had been to one of the basketball games. His letters became spaced out a week apart. Then she wrote a longer letter:

DEAR DON:

Why is is that you no longer want to see me? You don't say in your letters that you don't, it is true, or that you have changed in any way from what you were at Christmas time. But you must have. You come home, go to the basketball game, and go to see all the people you say you don't care about, but you don't even say a word to me, even over the telephone.

Is it because of something I have done which you dislike? Then why don't you tell me? In your letters you have hinted at things you wouldn't dare to say straight out and to my face. About what a nice family I belong to. To hear these things from the "people" is what I expect, but from the celebrated Don who *understands!* This Don who is *different!* I'm sorry, very sorry that you look upon us and "our

affair" as you seem to. I'm sorry too that we cannot become friends as I have wished. I am left alone here without anyone at all, you having forgotten that we were to be together against the "people."

I do sincerely hope that you will change your mind. If you have made it up that I am one kind of person, then make it up again that I am quite another when the occasion is of the right sort. I trust you will answer all these questions very soon.

But before this letter had been in the mail a day she had a chance to go to the city. They were buying furniture on the installment plan, and she went to arrange the details. She 'phoned him on arrival, and by a wonderful coincidence he himself answered the telephone.

She said, "Do you know who it is? I'm just here for the day, so I won't annoy you long, but I'll have just a few minutes to spare to talk to you. You'll come downtown this afternoon and meet me, won't you? Even though you don't want to, do it anyway, because it won't take long, and you might be surprised when you see me again."

She was talking in the old indifferent tone, and it got him. He came along in a new muffler and a new hat, and no one would have mistaken him for someone who didn't go to college. Luckily they were meeting in a rather non-college part of the city, so that his home connections and his school connections were not brought to bear on each other.

He was in a pet when he met her, just nodded sharply, pulled on his hat, and said, "Which way are you going, or are we going to stand on the corners in the usual way?"

She said, "Hello. I didn't expect you to really live up to your word and come. The corners here are very good, and no one will notice you. I've only got a few minutes to wait for my train. Maybe we can walk to the station, if it doesn't make you mad. Whatever made you come to see an old lady like me whom no one wants to see any more?"

The clothes she was wearing were practically identical with those he had last seen her in. She was wearing storm rubbers, which were

a little clumsy, and a hat somewhat faded. Her eyes were not brilliant as in the night. One of her gloves was out at the finger tips.

"Oh, cut the sentiment. Why do you want to see me? What good can I do you? You need an older man who can get you things—give you a return for any chance favors."

He strode ahead, and she kept pace on a trot. "Hey," she said, "we're not in this much of a hurry."

He walked more slowly, keeping his eyes to the front, not giving her a single look.

She said, "You know, I like to hear you talk. Maybe that explains it all. I haven't heard anyone really interesting since the last time we were together. And that was some time ago. It's a hard thing to do without good talk when you're used to it. You don't know, of course, since you can listen to yourself."

"Yes, I do a hell of a lot of interesting talking to myself. What's your purpose? What are you trying to do? What do you want to say to me? First you give me the air when I'm

handy to you and you don't need me. And when I'm away and somehow, God knows how, you conceive an interest in hearing me gas, you flip over a page and act as if you were interested. I'm no mountebank, no public entertainer you can whistle for."

She turned to his turned-away cheek and smiled as if she were talking about the weather.

She said, "Who will tell you? There must be something about you that interests me. I didn't really need to make this trip, why did I want to? Perhaps just a little bit dippy from not talking to anybody that has something to say. Just anything to say would do if they forgot for a few moments who I am and how I've been brought up. Just one who's different, as he says, says nothing like the rest, and I have to talk to myself."

"I can see how you're left in the cold out there. What can I do? I can't be out there, I've got to finish off this damned school and be out of here to some place where one can live with-

out a pedigree. Why don't you go away? What good does it do your mother to have you going off your nut?"

"Oh, it's not so bad, being a little nutty. The others are worse than I am, even you, but it doesn't show when they're all of one kind. But you won't be any better off when you go. What'll you do? Just settle down like all the others, marry into your proper place in the social scale, and tell your grandchildren how when you were a young man you were also wild and unconventional and told lies to a crazy Russian girl."

"I haven't told any lies. Why would I need to tell lies? You might think I've been plotting against you."

"Just innocent lies, the kind that don't count, of course. Like spending week-ends working on exams."

"You're balmy. You sound like the country girl talking to the city guy."

They had been lingering in the station, and, as her train was announced, she pulled at his

coat and forced him to look at her. "You must see me when you come out again. Answer my letter if you haven't already done so. Think it over seriously. Good-bye."

Don walked back without turning to watch her go. But what could he make of her? Only two nights with no opportunities to be more than just acquainted, a week of his best letters, and this was the result. She treated him like dirt and was sore when he tried to let the whole thing go in the easiest way. Something in the foreign temperament.

IV

Anyway, he decided to get back some books he had lent her, and his letters. He answered her serious letter as follows:

DEAR MARYA:

I am writing to ask you to mail me *Chords of Vanity*, as I will not be able to see you again, at least for quite a long time. Now indeed it looks as if our early dream has faded somewhile, aghast alike at the importunity of a commercial world, and our own too

pitiful mundaneity. For the wraithlike gestures in the earliness of our venture have stirred only within their ethereality, and now lie spread attenuant.

It goes so as accordance of law: you shall ask for what cannot be given. But you yourself should not be too much sad. You may be cynical, now as always, in the echoes of the wistfully forlorn attempt. Maybe, as of your graciousness, I may be therein not too sorrily iterated. If you have kept my letters, with their grievous record of what must now appear to be infancy folly, please return them to me, so that I may undertake the miserable obligation of burning them. And yet, being selfish as always, allow me this much: I shall retain yours so as to possess the better half.

The letter filled the two note pages, whereas the ones preceding it, few and far between, occupied at the most a single page. And whereas before it was simply some news of the day which was written on the page, he was now writing in the grand manner of the very earliest. He was beginning again to appreciate himself, and her also, in romantic rôles which he would

not give up without a struggle. His letters remained enclosed in a strip of silk, and Marya wrote in reply:

DEAR DON:

Our love is not dull and finished, even though you have made it seem so. It is you, who claim to see things that others barely glimpse, who will not see clearly now. The light seems dim because you look in from outside through the thick panes of misunderstanding. It is very bright inside, which is in my heart. If you would make an effort to see me, when we could be our real selves again, perhaps you would be able to free yourself and find the old signs as clear as ever.

You would see what you have neglected to see for a long time, what your friends at college and at home won't tell you about. Do you remember our night in the snow, the terrible blizzard I was such a fool to ask you to come out into? Something happened then which maybe you didn't realize, something which I had longed for, but which I believed would never come to pass. Something strange like the flight of an arrow. It must have been Cupid's piercing my heart. I thought it had also happened to you, but before. Why have you forgotten all these weeks? Or

is it that you know and remember and yet tantalize me?

I hope on next Saturday when you come out, for I expect to see you then, you shall have forgotten how to be so mean, and be again your old sweet self, the boy I met two months ago (how long ago that seems).

The girl who was indifferent, passive, and without affection had practically said she was in love with him, just because of his feat of writing a letter which brought things to a head. In a strange way she had fallen in love and had expressed it so oddly that without a letter of that kind he would never have found it out. This letter had the Russian resignation and at the same time a frank and earnest declaration, which none of the other girls, rich or poor, could equal. She was the very girl whose side he must be on by nature, since obviously she was not in her rightful position, only because of being born in the wrong circumstances. He burned up the rest of the week with more letters, at every odd time in which he thought

of new ways to say it. Her letters came in reply at high speed, so that by Saturday they had prepared for more than they could perform. They met as in a pause.

She had stolen wine from a cache of her father's in the house, and she brought it out from under cover of her coat. They drank the full bottle in rapid gulps, in the same doorway which had sheltered them from the blizzard. She was entirely remodeled, wearing a close-fitting dress borrowed from her sister and in the latest school mode, a strange turban, a new pair of low-heeled shoes.

It was an early March night, and March was coming in like a lamb. It was mild and balmy and dandy. She was different and not indifferent. Her eyes had stopped their free careless wandering. The wine flushed their faces, and in this luster her eyes gleamed.

He had a new topcoat, was clean from the bath, and completely overhauled. He drank to her, looking her way, and had left the sulk at home.

He said, "You're wonderful. You look like a gypsy."

"Sometimes it happens as you expect. I guess this may be one of those times."

They went through the night stiff jointed, hesitant to do anything lest it spoil their bliss. In their trance they omitted the words they ordinarily used for talking, and for once he was talking in the writing grand manner. He used his dressed-up words, washed and ironed, and not saying very much to the point. His conceit was appropriate to the suspended animation. It gave an arrogant bearing to their exclusive world.

The sounds from the side as they walked down the aisle of the theater were a nice processional buzz, as if the center of scandal had a new location. She said, "The girls in the office are learning something about yours truly." She smiled in her enigmatic manner, having for her secret what they did not know about her. They did not know what she could be like

when there were things to be done in the grand manner.

"They'll have something to talk about next week, and they ought to thank us for that, but I suppose they won't."

The movie would have been dull enough if they had seen it. They were more interested in holding hands and in giving themselves up to romantic dreams.

They came out before it was finished, and walked up a hill away from the main street. From the top they looked down on the brief lighted district of the town's center. They continued along the back roads. There were lights in the parlors, showing people playing cards, and people talking, the young giggling in back of the parents and the guests. Some kids going home shouted their to-morrows.

They came to a small bridge crossing a scrawny stream, which was to be ruined by a pickling brine passing from a factory downstream. They were alone and lost to the view. The nearest street was dim in the dark, barely

showing the white clapboard houses of the factory workers.

He said, "I never thought it would happen as nice as this. This is the best thing that ever happened in this old town, and they'll never know it."

He stood with his arm around her, her head on his shoulder, watching the struggling stream eluding the rocks in order to be able to penetrate to the place where it would receive the pickling brine. They stood without talking, continuing in their trance. Nothing marred the solemnity of that night.

Marya's senses were keener as she skipped into the house and carefully went by the father's door. There was a strong steaming sound. The old boy was full to the gills. Her mother murmured from the darkness, "Is that you, darling?" She hurried to bed to catch the falling feathers of thought while they settled. Her eyes gleamed, and the corners of her mouth turned up as if tweaked.

Her uneasiness was gone; she had brought

the boy safely to port. The images of the meetings to come fluttered around her. Her future in the town was one of planning out "their affair," watching the course of their letters, enigmatic in the office about the open secret.

This he would contribute in his own person, but if he traveled his letters would be enough. The romance of love was her haven. She fell off to sleep, assured of more and more delicious trances.

THE BIDDY

THE BIDDY

THE dance hall was on the beach line and opposite the grove. In season it was packed with careless visitors, but out of season a gang of regulars was its population. At this time the music was better, and there were greater chances of finding the ones you were hoping to see. Mike came down Sunday nights without fail, with some schoolmate who was also addicted, or alone.

The band was a knockout. It had an extra-state reputation, and record companies were bidding for it. Nevertheless, in spite of this fame, it remained in the old place where the reputation had been born, a good deal because some of the members were from school and so obliged to stay around the town until gradu-

ation. It was wild and raring and neat on the pick-ups, the breaks, and the blends. The trumpet went in dirty on wawas, and during these special tear-me-aparts the accompaniment underneath broke into regular double-beat rhythms, at which the bimbos rollicked their care-free feet. 'Way down from under they raised a note until it burst—in a delirium. The mob of molls who couldn't stay away when they played like this would dance with the worst, whether properly introduced or not.

With snow on the ground, the weary blues were weird. They moaned on the lanes, empty in the snow, white with crystals shining beneath the street lamps. The boarded stands and the merry-go-rounds were desolate during this hibernation. Only the front of the hall was alive, glowing in bare lights, a border and three horizontal rows framing the name "Mayfair," showing up the white ship's paint peeling off the raw boards.

When they got off the car, which was at the end of the line, they heard the band and went

along faster. Mike tried to hold in his pace and to hold onto being nonchalant. He wanted to get there, but without undue show of being overcome. Mac pretended to come for amusement, and for study of the habits of the proletariat. He sought out dances, and made dates, just as Mike did, but talked as if he were merely passing the time. The molls kept in their fore on the walk over, their goloshes clicking and slishing, while passing back and forth the giggles.

Inside the hall was mainly a fenced circular arena, with benches at the fence, and as much area again between this and the circumscribed square which formed the outside of the building. A strip on the left as you went in contained the coat check room, the men's and the women's rooms; in the right near the corner was a refreshment stand, and directly opposite were bolted doors which shut off the long promenade on the pier, the luxury of the summer guests. The band stand had its back to the entrance and sat on the edge of the dance floor.

A town gang kept a station on one side of the door and sneered at the open goloshes on collegians or on snooty college widows. The town guys' pants were stiffly creased, and the hair greased, the neck and lower head looking very white beneath the saucer line to which the barber had clipped.

Mac and Mike came away from the coat check stand, walking away from this gang and talking on a subject which served to remind them of their difference, as college men, from the sneering muckers. This mockery made the muckers more outraged; just half a chance and they'd let go a right to the jaw, but without this half a chance no town-gown riot got under way. The town ran in a pack, but the gown, though it recognized its members, nevertheless remained disorganized, jealousies of different kinds keeping the parts separate.

Mike said, "I'm glad all these girls went to church this morning. It will help to redeem the sinning of to-night."

"Do these bags go to church?"

"Of course they go to church. Do you think they're heathen? Why shouldn't they go to church? They're not much the worse because of being contaminated by guys like you on the Sabbath."

"You must be hot on the trail of one of these dainties, Mike. How long have you been a traitor and spy to your kind? You're off on the wrong foot. Who persuaded you of this heresy?"

"What the hell does one of these girls get out of going out with students? A good time, while it lasts, and then where is she? She's ruined, I'm telling you. She's out in the cold, and she's lost all her good chances. These town guys who can do her some good aren't going to bother with the students' leavings."

"Lay off, Mike, this is a free country. Give the girls a chance to work their points. Who knows what the beneficial association may bring about?"

"It's no good for their future. They ought to lay off the students."

"Well, what about you?"

"I'm on their side. I'm not out just to dilly-dally with them."

Then they spied the old favorites, Lil and Mildred, without whom no Sunday night at Mayfair would be complete, and went over to them. Lil was wearing on her willowy form a green velvet dress with a tight bodice and extra long in the back. It was cut close and was without sleeves. As she bent in the middle in the course of the dance the back edge trailed on the floor. Mildred was of sturdier figure and was more severely rigged. Her dress was black satin with a silvery sash, and she wore silvery earrings to match. They walked out carelessly, paying no attention to the honks and razzes of the jeering squad.

There was no competition for Mac and Mike for these first dances, but while dancing these old stand-bys had both eyes peeled for fresh freshmen with plenty of jack who were ready to put it into circulation. Lil followed in the dance with long lingering glides, her dainty

feet invisible from the back because of the sweepy velvet. Mildred also bent in the middle to adjust to the dance, but there was more resistance in her movements.

The hall filled quickly with the others, and with a hubbub. Mike wandered around and was turned down too often. Some looked off distantly; some looked him over for a cold fish. Then he walked up to a slim girl with an Irish look, smiling to herself as she watched by the rail. She wore a modest blue dress with a bright scarf knotted and swung round her shoulder.

He said, "Oh, hello, can I dance with you?" She nodded.

She also took a position bent back from the middle for dancing, and the waves of her hair cut a wide circle in the turns.

"You haven't been here before, have you?" he said. "I certainly couldn't have missed you."

The band was playing blues and was wailing a unison while the trombone sang out the docket of woes. Mike's eyes shone, and he maneuvered into the area where the band was most visible.

She said, "You've the gift of the blarney. You'd never miss me."

"You bet I would, Princess. There's no forgetting you."

She followed the hesitation stops, and the weaving back step quite close to him, and she turned and twisted as the blues exorcized their inhibited movements.

"Princess?" she said. "That's a new one."

"Well, in case you don't know, I'll just tell you the story of the Irish princess. You're not Irish, are you?"

"Not so's you'd notice it in my face, would you?"

"I'd never guess. Well, once there was a princess living in ould Ireland in one of the odd corners, surrounded by bogs and shillelahs. She was living there with an old biddy, a former serving girl of the palace, to whose care this princess had been entrusted while yet a babe in arms, and taken out into the ordinary part of the kingdom for the purpose of living

her early years with the people whom she was to govern. Of course, since she was taken there so young, and before she had been in any other arms than those of her nurse, she had no idea that she was a princess and played with the other kids as if she were their like, and indeed she seemed to be so. Now when the princess grew up and of course she was very beautiful, the old biddy was so crazy about her that she couldn't do without her, so she delivered to the king's messengers at the appointed time some ordinary brat of the neighborhood. The princess had no way to realize that she was of royal blood, and the old biddy wandered all over the world with her, and they have not been heard from since, though there are many reasons for guessing that they are in America. Do you get the drift?"

She smiled, and she knitted her brow. "Some lingo," she said.

"How about telling me your name?"

"How about telling me yours first?"

He told her quickly, as the dance was ending, but she walked off without telling hers, saying, "I'll see you later."

He bumped into Mac as he turned after watching her. Mac said, "My God, Mike, how do you do it, dancing with the famous Mollie. You've got to have the coin to dance with that baby."

"What do you mean? What do you know about her?"

"She's the most famous of them all. Probably hasn't been arrested more than once, but certainly has had some close calls."

"That girl? You're all wet."

"I've got a dance. See you later."

Mike moved over to the fence, edging into a vacant space and looking into the whorl of moving bodies for a glance at the trim legs of this girl Mollie, clipping the steps in, her body leaning back from the waist, the flock of hair floating free in the turns. Once she was spun to the edge of the vortex; reflected and refracted by a number of encounters, at last she

spun out to get free. Other dizzy broads with their playmates closed around her in this free space, providing more encounters, by which her direction was repeatedly changed until she spun out to another free space.

Then the lights were turned down, and the band was playing "Lady of the Evening," which brought tears to the eyes of the dance-mad gang. Mollie became lost to sight.

He danced with other girls picked up at random, and spilled out a word spiel without holding the interest. "Do you have to do this, college?" said one. His aim was to talk up to their good-looking legs; a girl with good-looking legs by that token deserved all the eloquence and polyeloquence. But this gabbling did not disturb them or win them. They scooted around on their steady tenpins regardless. He maneuvered to watch Mollie when he got the sight, and her eyes distracted the course of his "line."

He got her for the last dance and arranged to go home with her; that is, rather to take her to her resting place for the night, since she in-

tended to stay with a girl friend living in the suburb next to this beach resort and reached in a short walk.

As they were leaving, an older man stopped her. "Where are you going? Who's that you've got there? Another of those students? You've got to lay off them, hear me."

He was pinching her arm hard as he spoke.

"You're hurting. Let me go. I've known this boy for a long time before he went to school. Let me go."

Mike stood one side without a word.

"You're coming home with me. I don't trust you. Stay here now until I get my coat, and we'll go."

"I can't go. I'm going with Hazel. Her mother's expecting us. You can call her up and find out the time we get there. Please, Jerry, let me go this time. You can see that we're going there right away. This boy hasn't got a car."

Hazel also pleaded, and the man soon yielded his consent.

On the street, when they had gotten out of his sight, she said, "He's a fool, that uncle. I hope he loses all his money and can't come to these dances. He thinks every student I meet is sure ruin for me. He's killing my fun, dragging me home with him from every dance."

"What's your uncle got to do with whom you go to a dance or leave the dance with?"

"He's just watching for my safety, he says, and he spoils everything. And he's always around because he has an interest in the band and follows its engagements."

They walked along dim lanes, in the direction back to town. It was black and very quiet, just the stillness of dark houses and the open windows of the bedrooms. The noises of trolley cars and of cars leaving the dance hall were very faint. Mollie and Mike got far in the lead of the other pair and so had extra minutes in the doorway of the small frame house in which Hazel lived.

They talked in whispers to avoid disturbing the sleeping elders. He said, "That uncle makes

things tough, always suspecting you. Do you know many other fellows?"

"Do you know Bob Hands, George Brown, John Doggett, Cy Cryptic?"

"Wait a minute, you know too many. I suppose they're swarming around you like flies on a cake."

"Oh, no, I don't see them, just dance with them. I never get a chance to get out on a party."

He was maneuvering for a little necking, and she responded, but very saintly, in a dreamy state, as if she were the sleepy princess being awakened by the soft strokes of a loving courtier. She ran her fingers through his hair and said, "You tell nice stories, tell me some more."

"I can read you some or send you some books. You've got a smooth complexion. What nice eyes you have."

"Will you bring me some books? I'd like to read them. But you ought to come and read

them to me, because I never get a chance to stay home and read."

Then Hazel and her man came up, and Mollie talked to her. The dreamy conversation was ruined, and after a few parting presses the girls went in the house, and Mike and the guy walked toward the car line, talking only as was necessary.

When Mike stopped in the all-night restaurant around the corner from the dormitories Mac was sitting there bending the coffee spoon back and forth over the edge of the mug.

"How did you make out?" he said. "Is she as fast as her reputation?"

"She's a funny kid. You wouldn't understand a girl like her."

"Sure she's funny. The funniest thing I've heard about her was what she said to the cop when he caught the gang having a moonlight swim. Did she tell you about that?"

"That's just talk. She's no regular bag. Some guy who couldn't get her made that one up."

"Well, it's known all over school, but don't think I'm trying to disturb your innocence."

"Well, I figure it out for myself. She's all right."

"What's the matter with you, Mike? You don't seem to get onto the game. Try a little system. A card index. What they're useful for, when they're available, whom they *tell,* whom they know, and of course at the end a quality rating. Only by such means can we make efficient use of the sweet and innocent."

"You're a hell of a monster, Mac. She's a nice kid, I don't care what you say, and I'm for her."

HOT AFTERNOON

HOT AFTERNOON

THIS afternoon, at the end of June, the college part of the college town was beginning to fade out in the dusty heat. There were only faint signs of its activities in the air, a stray alumni costume, the fussy movements of families of the graduates.

Mike was going out a street at the edge of the college, traveling a desolate road to keep a date with a pick-up made the night before. It had been a slim girl with a short black silk dress tied around the middle, and a white silk band around hair more copper than blond. A thin face with bright eyes and ready to listen. He had said, "Gee, it's too bad I've got to leave to-morrow. Can't I see you to-morrow before I go, so that we can write to each other and know who it is we're writing to?"

She said, "Oh, I've got a date to-morrow night, but you can come to my house to-morrow afternoon, but I can't promise you any entertainment."

He went by some new apartment houses. The respectable homes of the university employes, the professors, mechanicians, lab and executive assistants, disappeared at the end of the shade trees. The view became clear, to the sky; and above the low roofs of the clustered houses were the brick, steel, and glass sides of the factory, surmounting the view. The little houses were without lawns and as hot as the pavements. The sun was refracted from the car tracks and finally absorbed by the houses, and the thin paint skin of the wood was peeling. Passing around a corner opposite the car barns, he found the number she had given him over a door between a butcher's and a grocer's.

He went up a long flight of stairs without a carpet, but very clean, and at the top of it she stood, again in her black silk dress and the white band. There was a strip of patched oil-

cloth on the landing. The railing closed it off and made it look like a balcony.

She said, "Oh, hell. I was beginning to worry about whether you were coming or not. Isn't it strange to have a date in the afternoon?"

The little balcony was very clean. Its ceiling met the wall in a curve. On the wallpaper there were roses.

She took him by the hand and led him into the room behind her, where he laid his hat on the couch and turned to meet a large woman in an apron who was pushing the hair back from her brow. Mary said, "This is my mother. She was just saying you were the first thing that ever kept me home a Saturday afternoon."

He said, "How do you do, Mrs. Garland. I'm glad to know you."

Mrs. Garland said, "Oh, it's a very hot day to-day, isn't it indeed? I've been fearing I'd wash myself away with the dishes. Weren't you very hot getting out here, Mister?" She wiped her hands on her apron and lifted a corner to her brow, for she had come away from her work

in the kitchen to have a look at Mike. The thin girl beside her was some different from her mother.

Mike told them it was blazing hot under the sun. He didn't see why everyone who lived on that street without any trees at all wasn't fried or burned to the bone.

A man smaller than his wife came in from the room behind her. He had taken off his collar, and the white collar band with the yellow tarnished collar button were the smooth and cool part of his upper attire. The back of the blue and white striped shirt was streaked with perspiration. He had his corncob pipe lighted. He shook hands with Mike.

Mary took Mike to the front of the room. There were four windows looking across the square toward the car barn, and the yard of tracks running to it. A potted flower was in a stand on one side.

Mary said, "The view from here isn't much, but it's better than looking at that wallpaper and those pictures."

She was nervous. She started the victrola. "Maybe we have one record you haven't heard."

Mike said, "I hope you've got one of the old records I like. There are a couple of records I can never get to hear. I've heard each of them a long time ago at some girl's house, and I haven't heard them since. I hunt for them every place I go. One is Paul Whiteman's 'Best Ever Melody.' "

That one she didn't have. She played the very latest she had, a dance record. Mike sat in the best chair near the window. The heat glistened off the cobbly street. The record was making too much noise. She heard only half of what he shouted. Her father took the chair opposite Mike.

Mike said, "You ought to have a few shade trees on this corner, they'd do a lot of good."

"Yeah, I guess they would, but you can't get the city government to spend the taxpayers' money that way. They build a swell green in the center of the city and leave the rest to take

care of itself. There are plenty other things they could fix up out here, young man."

"I suppose they only have trees on the streets the aldermen live on. Those streets must be well lighted and well taken care of."

"Well, we don't have much trouble with lack of light on this corner with that big car barn across the way. Guess there hasn't been a burglary or a hold-up since we came here. Is that right, Mother?"

He yelled the question to the kitchen. Mary leaned over the back of Mike's chair.

"Wouldn't you like to hear 'Hard-hearted Hanna'?" she whispered. "They're going out to the movies in a little while. Don't mind him."

She started the record, and the answer from the back room could scarcely be heard. Mike was listening to the Little Ramblers; the boy on the percussion had a fast cymbal pick-up.

The father said, "Stop that record, Mary, you can't hear yourself think."

He went on, "Yes, and this square is just about as it was when we first moved in. Except

for that new fire hydrant on the other corner. Nearest one used to be down the street a ways. Good thing they did too. If that car barn ever got going, they'd have the time of their lives saving a single car. The old barn is ready to go, been up there ever since I can remember, and it's as dry as a piece of matchwood."

Mike was trying to listen. Mary was behind his shoulder telling him not to bother, that the old man went off this way every night.

He nodded, "I guess it would, all right. It'd make some bonfire."

"It started to go once. About a year ago, I guess it was. Didn't have much of a start on them, but one whole section was gone before they got it where they wanted it. They've got some first-class fire machines nowadays. But it gave them some trouble even at that."

He was puffing on his pipe peacefully and using the gobboon by his side. The wind that withdrew with his words was helping to keep him cool. He was leaning back in his chair and warming up to his audience.

Mrs. Garland came into the doorway of the room. Mary signaled to her behind the father's back. She said, "Come in, old man, come in here and let those young ones be. We'll have to be tidying ourselves to go." Mike turned to smile at her. She winked. The father stretched himself as he got up from his comfort.

Mary said, "I guess you can see what I've got to go through every night I'm home. Or at least at supper. He tells me, and keeps telling me, how bad I'm getting to be. He doesn't like Dora especially. Dora and I go everywhere together, and he thinks she's a bad influence. You must have noticed her last night, a dark, very barbaric girl. Usually everybody is so interested watching her that they don't see me."

Mike said, "You mean that girl with her hair drawn very close to her head and dressed something like a gypsy. Is she Spanish?"

"No, she's not Spanish. I don't know what she is exactly. Mostly American, like everybody else, though, I suppose. She wears the strangest clothes. She's so interesting, so bar-

baric and wild looking. Don't you think she's exotic? She's so unusual in this town, as if she'd been picked up out of the waves."

"She ought to try her stuff some place else. She's out of place around here. Those gypsy trimmings don't suit the streets around here."

"She and I have our typewriters side by side in our stupid office. She tells me when the boss is going to interrupt my reading, and I do the same for her. We go crazy places for lunch. You wouldn't believe we could find them, but we've found some very strange Italian restaurants. The other girls we know think she's a bit odd. Now they think I am too, because I go with her. What do I care? I can get along without them, and she makes life interesting. She's really very superior. She hardly notices the other girls in the office, and she pays no attention to what they say about her. I hope she'll be here before you leave, we're going to the show together to-night. She'd be an interesting type for you to meet."

Mike said, "She seems to have a lot of sex,

but has she any sense? Why does she make herself so conspicuous?"

"I know. That's what some of the girls say. They say she's putting it on for show. But that really isn't so. It's her nature. She has to dress that way. Otherwise she feels dull and depressed."

Mr. and Mrs. Garland appeared in the doorway, dressed to go out. They got up and went over to the door. Mary said, "Oh, Mother, are you going? Now, be home before dark and don't go painting the town."

"Hush up, Mary, don't be instructing your mother. And take care you entertain your company while I'm gone."

Mary kissed her a quick peck on the cheek.

"I'm very glad to have met you, Mrs. Garland," Mike said. "I hope you have a good time at the show."

"Pleased to meet you, young man," said the father.

Mary gave her father his pecky kiss and leaned over the stairway till they got out the

door. Mike stood behind with his arm around her waist in such a way that the parents couldn't see it. She let him kiss her as she turned around, but she didn't stay for more. She went back into the room.

"Come on in. Now we can talk as we like."

He walked in slowly, peering through the door that led to the kitchen. There was a long hallway and some open doors off it. There was the edge of a white iron bedstead. On the floor of the hallway there was a new oilcloth strip with a flower border. The wallpaper was gray with a broad brown stripe. He passed the couch and walked over the worn carpet to the front.

Mary said, "I just wait for them to leave Saturday afternoons. That's a terrible thing to say about your parents, isn't it? But it's no fun while they're here, even if they're out in the kitchen. I know that they do all they can for me. But it's awful dreary here. I haven't anything to say to them."

Mike was looking through the records. He was on his knees before the music cabinet in

which the records were kept. He didn't say anything.

She said, "I think I can tell *you* how awful it gets sometimes. If it weren't for the things I do with Dora I think I'd go crazy sometime. Dora and I are trying to improve our situation, and really, Mike, all I get from the family is razzes. They say I think I'm a little better than they are. Dora and I are taking a course in English privately, with an instructor at the university. He directs our reading, and we give him reports of the books we read."

Mike said, "You won't get the most interesting books that way. Reading books in class even spoils the good books."

"Oh, yes, I know that, and Dora and I have our private opinion, which we don't give him, except in the discussions we sometimes have. He thinks we're rather radical when we prefer the books of the present day to the great books of the past."

"Did he tell you you were rather radical? That's fine. Maybe you can have some fun with

him. Say, I can't find that 'Hard-hearted Hanna' record. That's pretty hot. I'd like to hear that again."

She found that record, and he put it on. They danced on the faded carpet, feeling the worn boards underneath. She tossed back her rather copper head of hair and followed the steps in close to his legs. Her lips were slightly pursed out, and she had an infancy look.

She went right on talking. "I don't know how I stand it here sometimes. I guess you can stand anything if you have to. I come home from that unpleasant office, hoping for a little beauty, at least in the pages of a book, and I sit out on the back porch, hoping to be by myself, to have it all for my own. Then Sister comes to tell me what happened to her during the day. And Mother is complaining in the kitchen because the girl of to-day doesn't bother to help Mother. As if it wasn't enough to be in that terrible office all day helping Mother and the family. The Old Man asks me who the latest man is that Dora has placed in her

'charming chains'; he got that out of a letter he saw on my bureau, which Dora wrote to me. Who can think of anything in those conditions?"

She was talking earnestly, but not watching Mike. Mike was simply guiding her steps so that she could give her attention to her talk. Her body was tough, and her skin was coarse.

The record ended. Mike said, "That's a hot band. They've got the stuff. Did you hear that bad horn? Almost as good as Miff Mole."

She sat down again in her chair near the window, her legs resting on the heels of her black satin pumps, her short black silk dress climbing over her knees showing where the black semi-sheer silk stockings stopped being silk. In the sunlight her skin looked too white. And in that somewhat copper mass there were glints of her own darker hair coming through.

He started looking over the records again, and then put them down to go over to the bookcase on the other side of the room. On the top shelf were late books with colored jackets and

bindings, and on the bottom shelves were girls' books. Mary said that these were Sister's.

She didn't move from her chair. She said, "I'm a little guttersnipe. I was born in the gutter and raised in the gutter. You should have seen the places we lived in before this. This is a palace compared to them. I'm waiting for the day when Dora and I can go to the city and have a little apartment of our own to fix up as we please. I try to have a little expression in my own room, but Mother razzes me for that too."

Mike turned and looked at the long frail legs. "You've got some interesting books. Have you read them all? These must be the ones the prof didn't recommend."

There was a picture of Mary, standing above the books on the top shelf. He took that down and gave it a look.

She said, "Oh, don't look at that. That's one I had taken for Mother when I graduated from commercial school. I have one I like better on my dresser."

"Let me see that."

"Well, perhaps you shouldn't."

He said, "Oh."

She went into her room. He followed to the door of the hall. She brought out a picture taken in classical dancing costume.

She said, "Dora and I were out on a hitch hike last year and we took these in the woods. Aren't they funny?"

Dora's wasn't around, but this picture of the tough body of Mary in a classical pose in her bare feet showed how near the tendons were to her bones.

He said, "Well, that shows you up. Now I know what you are. You're a wood nymph."

"We were tired that afternoon, and we thought it would be some fun to get these pictures. Of course city girls never get a chance to dance in the woods."

When she was taking it back Mike noticed that it was getting near five. Near five, and all he had been able to do since the family left was

to kiss her once, dance once, and listen to the story of the dizzy Dora.

She came back. Mike said, "Let's sit on that couch for a while."

"Oh, it's too hot to neck. Don't you get tired of necking, Mike? I'm tired of it. The last parties I've been on I've been lucky. I've found boys who were just as willing to talk about books and the finer things as they were to neck. It's such a relief to be with a boy who doesn't want you just for necking."

Mike sat down on the couch, put his hand over his mouth to hold the yawn, and put his head down between his hands, running his fingers through his hair. She went over to the window, looking for Dora. The sun was dropping down, the hot boards on the roof of the car barn were ltooking better. More people were coming out on the streets. This house had a still air in it. The back rooms and the kitchen were brushed clean, had been cleaned up, and the air left them undisturbed. Mary stood between the windows with her back to Mike, the

black pumps, the frail legs, the short black silk dress, the rather copper hair, and the white band. Her chin was raised, and on one wall was shown in silhouette.

Mike said, "I guess I'd better be going. I'll have to be getting my bags ready to leave."

"Oh, are you? Why don't you wait? Dora will be here soon, and we'll make some iced tea. That would make your walk back cooler."

"No, I think I'd better be going."

He stood near the couch with his hat in his hand. She came over to him.

She said, "I wish you weren't going to leave town just as we're beginning to know each other. You're going to write to me, aren't you? I can't promise that I'll be very prompt in my answers, but I'll answer every letter."

"Well, don't wait so long that I'll have forgotten what I wrote."

She turned her face up to be kissed. They walked out to the stairs with his arm around her. At the top of the stairway she kissed him a pure, sweet kiss. She watched him go

down the stairs and smiled when he looked back. He had light wavy hair, and his coat was smooth on his shoulders. His hat was cocked, and he was smiling back at her.

When he came out into the street there was more stir in the grocer's. The butcher's meats were under gauze, where they'd be quiet till Monday. His shirt was stuck to his back, and his vest to his shirt. He loosened them and turned the corner away from the factory.

BORN TO SUFFER

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THE little Jew was to be ducked. Take the grease off him so that, if one were obliged to be near him, a smell stronger than the green must on machines might be avoided.

Johnnie Howells and Bruce Lane figured this was the afternoon to be doing it. They were on the steps of the mechanical laboratory waiting for the hours. It was a dry sunny day, a drowsy day to watch over tests on the performance of air blowers, or turbines, or a reciprocating engine, or to measure the transmission of heat through pipes.

Johnnie said, "The little wiener will be in my group to-day. He'll stink like a fish market."

"Let's get the little grease spot and run him

under the shower. Whatdya say, let's get him near water."

"He'll be afraid of it. It's damn long since he's felt it. How'll we get his clothes off?"

"Duck him with them on, if he gets wild. We've got to do it. Maybe he'll get the habit."

The gang was coming early. The breaks were coming right. Ted Martin came out of Lincoln Hall at the end of the avenue. A brother said, "Go along, you greasy mechanic, and tend the iron." Ted was carrying his union-alls. He said, "Go to hell, Sally, larn your books." He came up, whistling, and he paid no attention to a fellow on the other side of the avenue, who was a Jew.

"Hi, lads," he said, "a merry day for sleeping. Oh, Christ, I could sit here and rest. Johnnie, got your report? Let me see it like a good fellow."

Ted was on the *News*. It took a lot of time away from the reports. However, a few minutes early to class, a few minutes during a test, a few minutes' conference with the boys, and

his report was as complete as, and practically identical with, the others.

Johnnie handed over the report, complete with sketches and curves, carefully computed and labeled, and a model of engineering order.

"Don't blame me if it's wrong. Say, Bruce and I have been figuring on how to bring little Jake-ob near the water. How about using a shower in the locker room if we can finish early this afternoon?"

"That's a fine thought, Johnnie. I'm glad to hear it. I can see there's some use in you fellows getting here so damned early."

This Martin fellow was the class leader, if not the only pride. Besides being on the *News,* he was on the Student Council and the Y. M. C. A., pledged to the maintenance of Christian ideals. He had money, too, and it was only by a freak of a father, who had known engineers, that he was in the mechanical group. However, he didn't neglect executive training.

The Jew went by them, right into the labora-

tory. Then Ted said, "We must have a quorum, of course. The other gents will be right here."

There was a stream of the engineers becoming mechanics coming up the avenue, marking themselves clearly with the blue unionall rolled under an arm. During the week the laboratory uniform was used working on cars, painting rooms wrecked in the orgies, and brushing shoes. The little fellow wasn't with them. He lived outside the university, and he came always on the last minute.

The quorum gathered. Freddie Foster said, "Man, this will be wonderful. I've been aching to get my hands on the wretch."

"You're a brave boy, Freddie, we can use you. We were planning to use a crane to get him under the spray."

"At least a differential pulley."

"Slide him off an inclined plane."

"I'm wearing this uniform if I'm to get in touch with him."

Ted said, "That's fine spirit, fellows. Now, here's the plan. We gather in the locker room

as soon as the profs are done with their stuff and wait for little Jake to appear. Johnnie and Bruce are in his group, and they make sure that he comes. Then seize him, and in he goes to the torture chamber."

They cried, "Bravo!" "Wonderful!" "Marvellous!"

Johnnie said, "I hope a prof doesn't bust in."

"Oh, wake up, Johnnie, don't you suppose they can smell too? The guy that turns the water gets an A in laboratory practice."

The tower clock tolled its dismal knell at two. The lazy figures stirred. The knickered knees moved up from the grass. The fact finders regained their feet and moved their dopey bones toward the experiments. Ted was the last to move, alone on the steps, slashing in the curves of air pressure versus output, when he spied at the end of the avenue the little figure waddling along the perspective.

He had the greatest weight to move in his shoes, which were extra-soled to increase his apparent height. The shoes held him to the

ground, and his torso twisted to move him forward. He had goggles over the beak. He needed a haircut. His hair was long and black and wet and greasy. He held his unionalls near his flat chest. He was on a part run, trying to get in at the start. All the way along the avenue you could see the wave at the waist which helped to propel him.

Ted went in on a run. "Boys, I smell the smell approaching."

"Leave him to his pals of the afternoon. He'll be well taken care of."

Ted said, "Now, Bruce, don't fail us."

They went to their proper stations, as assigned for small groups. The gasoline engine was to be investigated by Bruce and Johnnie and Perry Norton and little Jacob. Bruce primed the engine and was turning her over when the big guy Stets came on and held him up.

"Wait a minute, Lane, wait a minute. You'll have a chance to do that. Now, are we all here, ready to go, boys? We can get this done in

a little over an hour if you fellows will dig in and work."

Bruce said, "Say, you'll do us a favor if you keep us just a few minutes longer than the other groups."

"What's up?"

"You'll hear about it. The gang's got a little job on."

"All right, fellows, I'm willing to go halfway with you any time. We'll work up some of the results if we finish too soon. We ought to do it anyway. Now, who's late?"

Bruce said, "One more to come. Here it is now."

Little Jacob, in unionalls, was hurrying over the concrete on the aisle at the edge of the machines. The fellows near whom he was likely to pass moved away. Ted looked up as the little pig eyes scanned him.

"Hello, Jake," he said.

The little piping voice with the slight lisp answered, "Hello, Martin."

Stets watched it coming. "Oh, you fellows have got him this week."

The little fellow slid into the group furtively. His greetings were spoken in a whisper. He didn't presume on friendship. He said to Bruce, "Say, what's dis going to be on?"

Bruce didn't have time to answer. Stets took the group to a conference room facing the laboratory floor, in order to give in a brief way the theory of operation of the four-stage gasoline engine. He drew diagrams, and they copied them carefully.

He said, "Now this is probably old stuff to you fellows. You probably know the gasoline engine inside out, and you've got a pretty good idea of how it works. But we'll dig it out anyway in order to be sure we agree on a theory to explain the quantitative test measurements we're going to get this afternoon."

The little fellow said quickly, "What's that? What are we going to measure?"

"Well, we'll come to that. First I'll explain these sketches."

The three copied the sketches busily, with only an odd question on the lettering where it wasn't clear. The little fellow didn't copy while the sketches were being explained. He asked questions. He was a shrewd little snipe in his nasty way. He riled Stets. Stets gave short answers. When the little buzzer began to copy, the others had finished. He leaned over Bruce's shoulder.

"What's that? That there. Is that a four or a nine?"

Bruce said, "What the hell, look at it on the board. That's the way I got it."

Jacob was that way in any class. He bothered the instructor while an experiment or a demonstration was being performed, forgetting to copy the notes and the figures. Then he bothered the guy near him to get a copy of them. He peered over his glasses into the notebooks around him, sniping for the last bit of information. This made the positions in the class held by Smith and Steudel not to be envied.

With Jacob carrying on in this way there

was no difficulty in completing the experiment later than the other groups. The lab instructors in general were as listless as their pupils. They didn't have the spirit to put in the half hour assigned by the catalogue to computation of results. Stet's group was alone on the floor as it ran its last load run. Stets ran the engine. He took no chances on staying there till suppertime. Only with his care, before and during the experiment, would the old sputterer do its duty. He ran the engine, and the pupils took the readings. It was a satisfactory arrangement.

Perry and Bruce went off, leaving Johnnie to put away the tachometer, and Jacob busily probing Stets for information on the best type of gasoline engine and how much you were cheated in the modern automobile. Johnnie did his job slowly, remembering his duty to his classmates. Jacob stuck like a burr. Johnnie went away slowly. He went down into the basement, into the locker room.

As he passed through the door the gang sur-

rounded him. The gang gurgled with laughing. "God, we thought you were Jake. We were going to dip you." The complete quota emerged from hiding places, joining in the fun.

"Say, what's the matter with the kike? What the hell's he doing?"

"He's talking to Stets. God, everybody's going to be in on this."

Perry said, "Let's give the poor bugger a chance to go peaceably. Put it up to him and see how he takes it."

"Hell, no, dip him."

"You're damn right, drown the rat. Give him plenty of water."

Even Smithie was in on it. He said, "I'm prepared. I've suffered too, fellows." He wore the cotton gloves of a workman.

Bruce came sneaking back from a listening outpost. "Say, pipe down, here he comes."

Ted Martin said, "Now, fellows, listen. Every man to his post, and no one drops the job. Johnnie and Perry are the boys on the shower."

The locker room was in a stilly quiet, as the extra-soled clogs clicked down the stone steps. Little Jacob was striving to go away just as he had come, in an awful hurry, now that he had made the best use of his opportunity for learning.

He came through the door and was seized, in a confusion of yelling and laughing. Bruce and Ted seized him firmly by the arms. They were supported on the outskirts by a ring of guards.

The little fellow's voice cried up into a screech. "What's the matter, what's the matter? What's the idea, fellows? Say! Leave me alone, I didn't do anything to you. Leave me alone, you goddam fools."

Ted said, in his snarling nasal voice, "We're not going to hurt you, Jake. Take it easy. Just going to help you along on getting your Saturday bath. You'll like it, boy."

He was kicking and screaming and grinding his teeth. They thrust him between the walls

of the shower. Bruce said, "Take off your clothes now and wash. That's all we want."

The little wiener went off dippy. "Leave me be. Leave me be. Goddam it, goddam it, you leave me alone. I'll kill you. *Oi,* I'll kill you."

He leaped at Bruce and tore at his face with his talons of finger nails. He tore a long bloody streak on Bruce's face. He wound his legs around Bruce's waist, and tried to bite into his shoulder.

"No, you don't, you pay for that, you goddam kike."

Bruce shoved him off with an awful heave, and the little body thudded against the marble wall. A small froth came to the mouth. The screams died in his throat.

Bruce stood in the door like a wrestler. "Goddam you, you're going to wash if I get soaked with you. Come on, take off your clothes before we douse you."

The piping voice returned and sent out lisping wails. "Oh, Mother, Mother, they're going to kill me. You goddam fool, Lane, you god-

dam fool, I'll kill you." He was gnashing his teeth.

Leaning over the edge of the shower, Perry said, "Get away from him, Bruce, he'll go off his knob. Get out of his way, he's taking it too damn hard."

Ted said, "Yeah, Bruce, you get behind and see if he quietens. We'll douse him. That ought to help him."

Perry said, "Wait a minute, it may be his only suit. Oh, for Christ's sake, don't kill the wiener."

Ted said, "Shut up, Norton, for Christ's sake, or we'll have to douse you too. Johnnie, turn on the water. It'll only wet his unionalls."

Johnnie turned it on. It sprayed him for an instant. It stopped the wails. The little fellow said, "All right, go away and leave me. Go away, canaille. Go away and leave me alone."

Bruce said, "We'll go away when you throw out your clothes."

Perry said, "Do it, Jake, I'll take care of your clothes."

"God, you go in for the grease, Norton."

Then the little fellow's wails tuned down the scale, and he sobbed and gulped and talked to himself in Hebrew. The class removed the unionalls and filed out. One by one the little fellow's cheap clothes came out of the shower. Bruce waited till he heard the sound of the running water.

He said, "Well, that's a good day's work. The little snail certainly dug into me."

The boys saw a couple of profs on the way out. These smiled as if they knew what had happened.

Perry got a towel and left it on the heap of the little fellow's clothes. The little fellow washed himself carefully. He was glad to get the chance. He couldn't get a bath in the house where he had his cheap room. "The goddam idiots. What the hell'd they grab me for? Why didn't they go away and let me alone? The goddam fools."

He parted and combed his hair with his fingers. He came out of the laboratory looking

much brighter and cleaner, his eyeglasses in his pocket, his dark little eyes squinting in the sunlight. Ted was coming out of Lincoln Hall when he passed.

"How do you feel now, Jacob?"

"That's all right, Martin. That's all right, Martin."

He smiled in his scared way. He clutched his unionall bundle and weaved his wavy way across town, back to his hole in the wall.

THE PARTING WAY

THE PARTING WAY

OLD GUS started his talk when the tables had been cleared and the cigars had been presented with the compliments of the alumni. The first few words were new; they concerned the appropriateness of this occasion. All too quickly they merged into the reminiscences which had featured, but only because of the time they occupied, the six other banquets sat through on the trip. The class was at a table by itself, having escaped being sociable. If no alumnus presented money for food for himself and food for an undergraduate he was unfortunate in being cheated of the chance to learn about the university state of affairs. No one had cheated during the early banquets. Grouped, it was new listening.

Ted said, "Christ, he's saying the same things again."

Joe Robins leaned over to him. "We certainly need a glass of beer to make us forget this. Does that door take us out?"

Mac and Mike were close together on the other side of the table. Mac said, "A class has no honor if it can listen to that speech more than six times."

Mike said, "The speech without the gestures wouldn't be so bad. Why does he twirl his hand around the magnetic fluxes as if they were his own? He pushes out his stomach, and only the hold he has on the magnetic fluxes saves him from going over backward. I suppose we're in for it again."

Old Gus was describing his first job when Ted and Joe got out. Richardson Smith said, "I don't think we ought to go off and leave during the speeches when the alumni have invited us to the banquet to listen."

Mike said, "Ted said that hotel around the corner from ours has the best beer of the trip.

I'll bet he and Joe are headed for it. When do we go?"

He and Mac were the next pair out into the black streets of this strange city. The coal dust was sifted by the winds and fell steadily over the town continually, day by day, in a light soot-fall. The city had a stir, which was not directly apparent, of the banked blast furnaces outlying it; they were walking through its streets with the impressions of the blast furnaces still lively.

The little beer hotel was around a corner and down two steps. It was a small white old building with memories. The bar in the basement was still the center of events and the chief feature. Behind it was an old-time bar-keep, an enormous apron tied around an enormous beer belly, a bald pate showing a pair of locks clearly glistening where they lay. The bar-rail was over sawdust. A free lunch stood one end, and behind the bar-keep, before the mirrors, shone a shelf of bottles, whiskies and gin and waters. There were men at the bar and at tables, and

the bar-keep was presiding, tuning the scene with solemn chant.

Ted and Joe were well known by now and within a small group were discussing the next president, the paving of the streets of the city, general commodity prices, and the race track. Ted shouted, "How in hell did you fellows get here? What's to become of our class honor? Somebody's got to stick by and uphold it."

Mac said, "Though all the rest depart, there will be sure to remain—Richardson Smith."

Ted said, "Fine. You're right. Have one on me. What's your drink, boys?"

Mac and Mike took their drinks without thanks. They were distinguished from Ted at school; he was a fraternity man, and they were not. No matter how friendly he appeared to be, they knew and he knew that there was this difference. Mac was a high stand man, with an acceptable background. He was not out of the running in the university, except in the things he didn't try for. He hadn't done any visiting during the week the fraternities were

electing. He said they were too damned snobbish. He preferred going around with the young high-school boy Mike, who was entirely out of the running. Mike was a tight little soul, rather ingrown. He hadn't been able to get the college attitude during the four years. He suffered from too little money and bad tailoring. The fellows generally liked him, but he had no standing, because he hadn't done anything, athletics or the papers. He was a good student, but so was Richardson Smith.

They stood at the end of the bar near the door, away from Ted and the gang of men. Mike said, "Well, we need a few more of these foaming glasses. The beer is good here." It was a light ale, with a proper mellow flavor, and with more than a few per cent. Mike was taking his down very fast; Mac was eating Saratoga chips and sipping.

Mike said, "That old duffer will go on with that speech, word for word with the one he gave in New York. I'll bet he gave the very

same one last year on the same trip, and everyone else there knows it as well as we do."

Mac said, "He's in his dotage, Mike. Time has stopped passing for him, and every time he gives that speech it's as if he were giving it for the first time. They all behave that way after sixty. When you get to be sixty, you'll tell your children about the wonderful time you had drinking beer, when you had escaped from an old man who talked too often."

Mike said, "I won't get to be sixty. I won't be an old drone living off the young blood."

Freddy Foster and Pete Peters arrived.

Ted said, "Noble."

Pete said, "We'll have the whole gang here soon. They're drifting out, one by one, and old Gus is only in his early manhood. They'll all be out before he makes his first invention, even Richardson Smith."

Ted said, "No, not Richardson, he'll never leave."

Pete said, "He may be the last man out but he'll not be a traitor to the class. I sat next to

him, and I convinced him he'd be going back on all of us if he sat there alone. He'll come all right."

Ted set them up the first glass and repeated with every newcomer. With each turn of the door he awaited Richardson; when he arrived the last correct attitude would have been discarded. The gang kept coming, each bringing along reports of old Gus's progress and of Richardson's battle with temptation. A stirring dramatic situation was building; Richardson's entrance was being prepared with the astonishing connivance of nature. Ted was fighting the battle of capital versus labor with the men; he had had about seven beers, and his true colors were showing. The bar-keep was doing his best to keep all quiet against great odds. The gang spread along the bar, and took beers to the tables. They stuck to beer, and on top of the banquet they raided the free lunch. And the free lunch was better.

Mac and Mike stuck to their places at the bar. Mac would have liked a table, but Mike

would not be moved from the bar with its clear vista of those innumerable bottles of whiskies, gin, and waters. Mike was talking of the parasites in society. There were too many men and women who didn't earn what they lived on. Mike was warming up to his subject just when Richardson arrived.

The gang united in an uproarious pæan of thanks that Richardson had at last been victorious over his stern and unyielding belief in what his grandmother had told him. He was cheered thrice; they crowded around him, slapped him on the back, and sang the song of Bullocky Bill the Sailor. Richardson leaned on the bar and shouted, "What will it be, boys, this one is on me." They cheered again and had one.

Ted was guided by helping hands along the line to Richardson. He said, "Say, Smithie, you've done a wonderful thing. I'm proud to greet you to-night. I do so for the whole class. I think this is the distinguishing mark of your college career."

"Well," Smithie said, "I figured it this way. We've only got a short time together. Soon enough we'll all be separated, some perhaps by the length of an entire continent. We may be spending our last hours together. I figured this was a good opportunity to be with you fellows, and enjoying your good fellowship while I may. After all, I'll have plenty of time to settle down and maybe not another opportunity of this sort."

The whole gang applauded. Mac said to Mike, "He won't have any trouble settling down; he's settled."

Ted had his arm on Smithie's shoulder. He said, "Smithie, never forget the spirit of good fellowship. It's a gift."

Smith's face was beaming. He was hypnotized by the recognition given to him. For four years he had been hard at his books and was graduating *magna cum laude*. His father had worked hard for the money that was paying Smith's way through college, and Smith felt obliged to get the best return for it. Now his

father would be pleased with the result, and Smithie would be prepared to get a good steady job, settle down, and save his money so that his son might be able to have the advantage of going to college. Just at this moment he realized that books are not all that college can give, and he wished that he had been able to do the other things. He was an eager listener to the stories that had started to go the rounds.

The noise from the silent activity of drinking beer was enormous. An old man at a corner table said, "These youngsters certainly do take plenty of this stuff into them when they get into a gang. They won't stop till they're carried out."

"Well," said his partner, "they've got the youth to do it. They've got no wife and kids to go home to, no job to get them up in the morning."

Mike had gotten well along on the topic of parasites. He was talking about the cause. He said, "Mac, they talk about their progress, industrial progress, specialization and all that.

What kind of progress is it which increases the number of people who fatten on the labor of other people who have to do the dirty work? What progress is there for those men working in the mills we went through to-day? What do they get out of it? Did you look at the bleak little shanties on the sides of these bare black hills, where they live? What do you think of them? A fellow told me they live as many as two or three families together in those outhouses. By God, what do they have to do that for? Someone ought to show all this progress up."

Mac said, "You get the idea wrong, Mike. There isn't any progress for these people; the progress goes for you and me. We get the benefits. These men slave away so that you and I can have the advantage of a modern university, drink beer, and discuss the trend of events, including the notion of progress. The Greeks had slaves. Would you have this discussion disappear?"

"You're damn right I would, Mac, and the

sooner the quicker. You didn't see the men working at the refractory furnaces, eating their lunches with their hands still encrusted with the damned stuff they have to handle. Probably wasn't a place near enough to clean them. When men are obliged to work in those conditions there is no progress."

"You've been brought up to be a proletarian, Mike, and I suppose you'll have a hard time understanding the aristocratic point of view. You know, by the law of the conservation of energy, you can't get something for nothing. Also you can't work and have leisure. In order to provide for the society where it is possible to develop the goods of life, which are in the high arts and pure mathematics, a certain amount of purely physical labor is necessary. Who is better able to supply this than those gifted by nature with physical strength and capacity?"

"From the way you've been brought up, Mac, you are unable to have any feeling against the slavery you live by. By what right are you

and I fitted to enjoy the fruits of their labor? Why is it that they, the workers, are not able to get any of the goods? The hell with your pure mathematics and the higher arts. Who can say he deserves these damn indulgences? It's the same thing as the lousy fraternity system. Someone thinks he's better because he's like the people who happen to have the money."

"I grant, Mike, that I've got a natural disposition to think about this situation in the way I do. But I don't see how you are logically correct in thinking this slavery isn't necessary. You certainly don't kick about using animals and vegetables for food; they're enslaved to your advantage as certainly as the workers are, and if you happened to be good eating, no doubt at all about it, you'd be cursing the system that arranged that you should be good eating. Well, I haven't anything to do with designing the system, and I know that any other I fixed up would probably be as bad, so why in hell worry?"

Freddie leaned over from his position next

them. "What in hell are you fellows getting so hot about? Can't you drink your beer without being highbrow and discussing the problems of the universe?" Freddie was a fraternity man. All he knew about Mac and Mike after going to classes with them for four years was that they talked highbrow when they talked together.

Mac said, "Not the universe this time, Foster. Mike thinks the social system is all wrong because they allow factories like the one we went through to-day."

Mike said, "You're bound to agree with Mac, so I suppose you may as well listen to what I say. I say the social system we have to-day is about the same thing as the fraternity system. Some are born in the manner to which the fraternities are accustomed, and the others aren't worth a damn except to work out the class problems and turn over their notebooks at examination time."

The bar-keep wanted to set up another round, and Mike's glass was half full. Mac said,

"Have your drink, Mike, we've got plenty time to talk about this."

The bar-keep leaned over to Mac and said, "That young fellow is getting just about enough, you better let him drink it slow."

Mike tossed off the glassful; he said, "Another all around, Charlie, I need some steam to talk sense to these fellows."

Freddie said, "I don't get you about the similarity between the factory system and the fraternity system. I don't mind telling you that I personally don't give a damn about the fraternity system. It may be that you two fellows who didn't show up as leaders in college will be the big men of the class after ten years out. All the fraternities do is to collect fellows of the same kind and give them a place to live for four years. They all get over it when they get out a while."

Mike said, "Fine time to say that now. After four years of not noticing us, you tell us when we're leaving and it looks as if we might amount to something after all, that we're not so bad.

The fraternities make the man who's got the money sure that he's important. Just like the factories make the bosses and the office clerks think that they're important. What's a factory for? To make things. Why aren't the workers who actually make the things given more credit?"

Freddie said, "I'll tell you one thing the fraternity system isn't given credit for: the fact that it turns certain fellows into radicals. Now, I don't feel myself any better than either of you. I feel a little inferior, as a matter of fact. You can work the problems that have been given us in school, and I can't. If the old man doesn't give me an allowance for at least a year, I'm going to be in a bad way. Anyway, whatever we've been in school we've all got an equal shot at the jobs that are being offered."

Mike said, "Yes, we'll all get lousy jobs and hardly any pay for a year. I don't care about the fraternities any more, anyway. I won't see a Greek letter any place except in equations."

Mike was waving on his supports as he spoke. The bar slipped forward beneath him. Mac and Freddie were supporting each other. They checked him as he slid forward. Behind them the noises of the group went on. More beers were placed on the bar and placed in the stomachs. Mike stood back by himself. He was very wobbly. He tried to hold on and continue the discussion. His beer was by his elbow unnoticed.

Mac said, chiefly to Freddie, since Mike was absorbed in the difficulties of holding his position, "Mike is a wild talker. I hope you don't think I agree with what he has said. He talks through his feelings, and you can't talk him out of them."

Freddie said, "I didn't know that he felt he was being snubbed. I didn't bother to talk to him because I figured he didn't want to talk to me."

Mike lost his position and slid all the way forward along the bar, till he was stopped when his heel caught in one of the bar-rail brackets.

His momentum then propelled him in the opposite direction; so for a time he oscillated on the bar-rail. Mac steadied him and piloted him to the men's room.

In the white-tiled room one bare glaring bulb before a mirror showed up Mike's white staring face. He reeled against the wall, falling. He was murmuring, "Who is better than who, anyway?" Mac was only a trifle more steady; they moved anfractuously across the room.

The gang had gathered about Ted, who had a seat on the bar. They were singing their favorite songs, which they had sung on every sleeper. Richardson Smith was the loudest of the singers, even though he had become familiar with the songs just this minute. He had his arms on the shoulders of two of his classmates. They did their best for the Ring-Dang-Doo, and when this chorale was done Richardson shouted, "Fellows, I'm certainly sorry that I've missed other occasions such as this one. Probably I've missed the best part of college life. After all, marks aren't the only things that

count. I'm darned sorry I've passed up my opportunities before."

Ted said, "You've got it now, the proper male spirit. College will do it for everyone. This is the way college men are made. Don't let it leave you."

Mike heard the speech as he came out. He said, "It gets them all, the proper college spirit. Forget you're alive for four years if you haven't got it when you get there, but when you're leaving you'll have it or no one will notice you. It gets them all. At the last moment the greasy grind lowers his colors and becomes the college type with the college ideas and the proper male spirit. Hurray for the system, it's fed on the smoke of the blast furnaces."

The gang said, "Oh, down the dirty crabber."

Ted said, "Shave and swallow your whiskers, Mike, and maybe you'll grow up."

Mike said, "You've grown up and you're dead already." But his voice was lost in the outburst of song which came from the gang,

more interested in Captain Dick from Kalamazoo.

He said, "That gang won't have an idea in its life. Fine chance of telling them what it's doing to them."

Mac said, "Come on, Mike, we'd better get back to the hotel."

HARD HELEN

HARD HELEN

HELEN said, "Come on, Ann. Throw on your rags. We've got to get going."

Ann was fussing with her hair. She had thrown off her ward uniform. She was having a good time dolling up.

Helen said, "That's good enough. You look pretty enough for these guys we're drawing to-night. You're not falling into a million. Cut the extras." She drew on her stockings vigorously and hollered across the hall to Bee, who was drawing on hers, "You won't have a chance to show those all the way up. The boys will just die from not seeing them. You shouldn't get their goat that way."

Bee was plumper and larger than Helen. Ann was slighter and frailer. Helen was good all around. She had on her fur coat before Ann

had finished her hair. She went back and forth between the rooms, her coat open, her hands in the pockets, talking. Ann said, "Well, Helen, we don't get a chance to go on a party every night, and, anyway, it's nice to feel dressed and different without a uniform."

Mac and Morgan had been waiting only a half hour when the three came downstairs. Morgan knew Helen. He said, "Hello, Helen."

She said, "Hello, Morg, how's Mamma's little boy to-night? These are my two little playmates." Mac got on to the names quickly. Morg went ahead with Helen to look for a taxi.

He said, "How's it going? Is it getting any easier?"

She said, "Hell, no. They work us like the devil. Tending the wards, and making beds, and waiting on saps, not a rich papa among them. But some of the young doctors are nice. But they try to break that up too."

When they were in the cab Morg said, "Helen, you haven't told me the names of your friends." He was looking at Ann.

She said, "Oh, hell, they all fall for the thin little ones. Ann, I knew I shouldn't have brought you along. This little boy here is my little boy, but I'll let you play with him a while."

Morg said, "Say, Helen, calm down the bruising."

She said, "Who's going to be at this party to-night?"

"Besides Mac here, there's Harry and Rog and Pete. Rog got hold of two other girls. I've never seen them. Rog is out after them, and Harry and Pete are in the house getting the entertainment ready." Morg was talking to her quietly; he tried to steady her down. Ann and Mac and Bee were talking about the lures of a big city.

They had to climb to a top apartment. The banisters were long and smooth. Helen said, "It won't be hard to get down anyway." After two flights she said, "Do you guys live up in the clouds? I hope it's worthwhile going up

for. Have you boys had your malted milks this week?"

Ann said, "Helen, stop."

Morg said, "A little less noise, go easy. Wait till we get behind closed doors. We're liable to get thrown out of this dump."

Helen said, "Fellow, what these walls love is noise. But they haven't been getting it with a scared guy like you running up and down."

Pete opened the door. He said in his suave voice, "Come on in, ladies of the chorus, we'll find seats for all. Nice quiet girls, Morg. I thought you were bringing in a brass band."

Morg said, "Pete, this is Helen, and Ann, and Bee."

Pete said, "Give me time for Helen. I've heard so much about you, Helen, how you threw stones at the campus windows. All in fun, of course, just a little fun with the boys. I certainly am glad to meet you, Helen."

Helen said, "I haven't heard as much about you, but I bet there's as much to tell."

Harry came out of the bathroom. "Well, so

this is Helen. Here as big as life and in the flesh and bone. Have a seat. Have a drink."

She said, "There's a man that talks."

The other girls hadn't arrived. Helen had a couple of stiff ones while she was taking off her wraps and restoring the face she had when she started. Ann wouldn't drink. Bee took hers in slow sips. Helen finished off Ann's in a gulp.

Harry said to Morg, "That Helen is going to keep this party moving."

Helen didn't like either of Rog's girls when they came. They were common girls, girls with principles. She said hello to them with reserve. She walked around the room and said, "Come on, boys, when does this party begin? We haven't got all night. Bring out your stuff."

Pete said, "Yay bo, Helen, that's the girl to get 'em going. Come on, Harry, a little drink for Helen."

Helen started the vic, pulled out a pack of cigarettes and lighted one. Pete started to dance with her, but she said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. I've got to have a couple of drinks,

these girls make me sick. A couple of good drinks to take away the taste."

Harry said, "That-a-girl, Helen, old kid, here's your explosion. Here's to their doubtful age."

Helen took half of it down before she danced with Pete. There was no one else dancing, but Pete was trying to move her out in the hallway. She kept to the room. Rog and Harry were coaxing the new girls to drink. They wanted weak ones, mostly ginger ale, but Harry was putting them up strong. Morg was sitting with Ann, talking earnestly and softly.

Helen said, "Gee, the doves are cooing. Will you look at this pretty little love scene? Come on, Ann, a little pash, make the boy feel it." She laughed a long time.

Ann said, "Helen, don't say that kind of thing. I don't like it, really I don't."

Morg said, "Cut the rough stuff on Ann, Helen, she's all right."

"Aw, she's the boloney, she's too sweet to live. You'll see her line after a while. Some

girls spiel it out straight and some drop the boloney. You watch out for that enchantress, Morg, I don't want Mamma's boy to be lost." She would have kept on, but Pete succeeded in moving her away.

Morg said, "Don't mind her, Ann, she's getting pretty tight. She's liable to say anything now. She's used to handing out lines to college guys. She thinks all the other girls do it too."

Ann said, "Helen's a funny girl. She pretends to be rough, but I like her; and I room with her, I ought to know. But she makes me mad, talking like that. I don't string boys along like she does."

Harry deserted Rog's girl, and he and Pete alternated with Helen. She was putting away half of a full glass between each dance. The drinks were being put up strong for the girls and weak for the boys. Helen was the only girl who caught on to the scheme, and she shared her drink with the boys; but she drank plenty. Morg took Pete aside and said, "Don't give her too much liquor, she's got to get back to

the hospital by twelve midnight, and she's got to get by the matron."

Pete said, "We can't keep her away from the bottle, she's a bottle baby. She's all right, Morg, she's the life of the party. She's had most of this bottle and she doesn't show a bit of it. That girl can drink any of us under the table."

She said,"You bet I can." She was dancing in an unlawful manner. She wound her arms around Pete's neck, cooing, "My sweet angel boy, darling of my heart, oh, what would life be without you? What can I do to show you how much I love you?" Then she broke away and swaggered across the room for another drink.

They were making a fearful racket. The vic was singing, and nobody heard it. When Helen took a drink, Harry and Pete in unison gave as many cheers as she had had drinks. Helen shouted as she danced. The noise could be heard a block away. Morg looked down from the window to see two cops on the other side of the

street looking up at him. Then the people on the floor below began to pound on the ceiling.

Pete said, "The hell with them, let them pound. This is the first party we've had in a month. It's early, anyway."

Then there was a rap on the door. Helen stopped short and said, "My God, what's that, the police?"

Morg went to the door.

He said, "Hello, Andy. What's the trouble?"

Andy said he didn't want to spoil their party, he didn't mind a little fun, but if they were a little more quiet the people downstairs would stop their belly-aching.

Morg said, "Step in, Andy. I guess we've had about all the noise we need now, we'll tone down. How about a little drink for Andy, Pete?"

Andy had a little drink straight, he finished off the bottle, more than a thimbleful. He smacked his lips. "That stuff warms a fellow's insides. I'm sorry to have to bother you fellows, but you know the people downstairs."

Morg said, "That's all right, Andy, we'll be quiet from now on."

When Andy left Morg said, "How about a little less noise? You keep Helen quiet, Pete, will you?"

Helen had hidden in the bedroom with Harry. She came out. "Hell," she said, "I thought it was the police. How about a little drink for little Helen? Pete, I need a little warmer. Harry hasn't got the steam. Where are those beautiful young maidens? Are you taking care of those beautiful young things, Pete? Ah, how you must love to hold them in your arms."

She reached for the bottle and found it empty. "Bring on the bottles," she said. But it was the last bottle.

She said, "Oh, hell, I've got to have another drink. Who's going to get another drink for Helen?"

Pete gave her plain ginger ale. She said, "Ginger ale. This is ginger ale. Give me a real drink. I need a real drink."

Morg said, "All right, Helen, we'll get you a drink, wait a minute. Listen, Helen, don't make such a fuss, have I done you wrong yet? I'll get you a drink. Take it easy."

She said, "All right, darling, I'll be quiet. I'll do anything for Morg, he's a good kid. He's not after you all the time." She was on the wane.

She lay down on the couch; Pete opened the window at the side of it and sat down beside her. He said, "You'll be all right, kid, you can certainly hold more liquor than any tank I've ever seen."

She was feeling pretty bad. She said, "Go away and leave me alone. Go away."

Pete got up, and she dozed off. Nobody paid any attention to her. The house was very quiet. Rog and Harry were off with the two girls of principle. Mac and Bee were on the big blue chair in the corner. Ann and Morg and Pete were talking together in the middle of the room.

Morg suddenly saw her falling backward

out of the window. He jumped toward her, but the cold air and the falling awakened her and she checked herself.

Morg said, "My God, Helen, get the hell away from this window. You were damn near down on the pavement that time."

She was scared. Her face was white. She said, "Who in hell left that window open behind me?"

She was swaying across the room. Ann followed her. Helen was very sick. When she came out of the bathroom they put her in on the big bed, wrapped a blanket around her, and put a cold soaked towel on her forehead.

Then she began to cry. Pete said, "What's the matter, Helen? Tell your troubles to Papa."

She said, "Shut up. The hell with you. Get out of here."

Morg was the only one who could talk to her. He told the others to go away and give him a chance to get her quiet.

She said through her tears, "I don't know what's going to happen to me, I guess I'm

going to die. Morg, I'm married, what am I going to do about it?"

It turned out that she had married some fellow on a spree. The whole party had gotten married. She didn't know whether she liked the fellow or not, and she hadn't seen him since.

Morg said, "You can get a divorce, Helen. Pete is a lawyer, you can talk to him about it. Or you can get an annulment if you haven't lived with him."

She continued crying for some time. She sobbed herself dry.

Then Ann came in. She said, "What's the matter, Helen? I'll take care of you."

Helen said, "Why don't you stop that damn noise?"

There was only slight sounds of a random laugh, and people talking.

"I'll bet that's that sweet girl Bee with her boy friend. That girl gives the boys an awful thrill."

She saw Morg, who had been comforting her, with his arm around Ann. She said, "Morg,

you've gone and deserted me for that frail little Ann. You've left a good woman, what can that small girl give you? Look out for him, Ann, he's a bad boy. He'll ruin you, Ann. You have to watch him carefully."

Ann said, "Now, Helen, stop."

Helen went right on. "I knew you were going to fall for that little Ann. No one can resist her, she looks so innocent. But she's some wild baby. Wait until she gets started."

Ann said, "Now, Helen, stop. That isn't right, and you know it."

Helen said, "Ann, don't be bashful. You've got the stuff and you know it. You just want to wait till you get in a little corner all by yourself to show it. Never mind, Morg; no matter how many partners we have, we're always friends, aren't we, Morg?"

Morg said, "We sure are. I'm your spiritual adviser. No matter how many other guys you're dealing along, you always come and tell me your troubles, don't you?"

Helen said, "I sure do, and I don't know

why I do it. We must understand each other, I guess."

She was beginning to feel better. She threw off the towel and the blanket and got up to go into the other room.

The bootlegger had come with another bottle. She said, "Ah, the boys have busted into their penny bank and gotten a little stuff."

Morg said, "It's nearly time to leave for the hospital, Helen. You don't want another drink."

She said, "Of course I need a drink. This party is going to hell. It needs a little pep in it. Who else is going to pep it up? Give me a good drink, Peter."

Pete said, "Sure, a good drink for Helen. Where would this party be without Helen? Down your poison."

She had a good shot and started breezing around to a fare-thee-well. She tipped Bee off Mac's lap. "Come on, get moving, you'll have enough of that later." She started a hula in the middle of the room.

Pete said, "Come on, Helen, that's the stuff, old girl. Give it to them, Helen."

He started clapping, and Rog and Harry came out from their slumber to help on the good work. The windows were open and the sound was traveling far down the block. Morg caught her as she sank down exhausted. The people below began pounding again. She said, "Aw, there are those old killjoys again. We're probably spoiling their married life."

It was eleven-thirty, and Ann and Bee started to get ready to leave. Morg thought it was a good idea to allow a little time for Helen to sober up on the way back. Helen had another drink and continued wiggling around in front of Harry and Pete. She said, "I'm not going back. I hate that damn place. Tell them I'm not coming back."

Pete said, "That-a-girl, Helen, stay here and be our sweet housekeeper. We could keep you well and satisfied."

She said, "You're damn right you'd have to, and I'd be worth it, every nickel."

Morg brought out her coat and got it on her. She went to the mirror to arrange her hat. Pete and Mac and Morg were going to take them back, Pete taking care of Helen.

She said, "Come on, what are you waiting for?" Then, "I'm not going to walk down all those stairs." She weaved along the hall ahead of them and got onto the balustrade. She lost balance halfway down and fell off on the stair side, then bumped down the rest of the flight. She was crying when Pete got to her, "Oh, my God, you're a hell of a bunch of guys. You're fine guys to take care of me."

Pete was laughing. "You certainly were funny, Helen, bouncing down those stairs like a bean bag." This cheered her, she laughed along with him. Pete and Morg took her down the other flights between them.

Morg said, "We better walk a while and get some fresh air. Let's walk over to Fifth and get a cab there."

Helen said, "I can't walk in these high heels.

I didn't come out for a hike to-night. I'm going to get a taxi right here."

Pete said, "Aw, come on along, Helen, we'll save a dime."

She said, "Are you cheap skates trying to walk us home? I know your game. We'll get over to Fifth, and you'll say it's only a little farther, we might as well walk the rest of the way."

She hailed a cab, and Pete waved the driver on. Morg said to Pete, "We've got to walk her a block anyway."

So he and Pete got on each side of her and, along with Ann, walked her smartly along the block. She tried to hail every taxi that passed. Pete thought it was swell fun, he laughed all the way over. She was laughing at the end of the block.

When they were in the cab, they opened a window next her. She sat on Pete's lap, and Pete held onto her. She laughed and sang and kidded Morg during the short ride to the hospital. Morg was waiting for a chance to make

a date with Ann, and she was interrupting him. The only fun Pete could get out of the ride was in talking to her. They got to the hospital at twelve on the dot. The girls were going right in. She got out, and Ann and Bee took either arm. She said, "I'm all right, kids, I won't disgrace you."

The boys let the cab go and walked over to the restaurant. Pete said, "My God, Morg, that girl Helen of yours is a wildcat. She's been there, she knows her stuff."

Morg said, "The poor kid doesn't know what to do with herself."

"Doesn't know what to do with herself? You mean she doesn't know what to do with anybody else. She's the whole show or else she won't play. She's named right, believe me, Helen does the helling."

"Yes, she does, but she does it because she doesn't know what else to do. She gets into an awful mess doing it, like marrying this guy."

"Oh, Morg, this girl's got you buffaloed for fair. She's a dangerous girl; she's likely to run

you into trouble with her husband, if she's got one."

Morg said, "She certainly makes a party hum, anyway."

Helen got by the matron and flopped down on her cot. She said, "My God, Ann, how am I going to get up for duty?"

JIM JAM

JIM JAM

AT HALF-PAST four in the afternoon Jim dragged up the stairs and let himself into the apartment. The shades were down in both rooms, beds as they had left them in the morning, breakfast dishes unwashed in the kitchen, clothes thrown around in the living room.

He added his coat and hat to the mess. He changed to an old red sweater, out at the elbows and gnawed in the collar, and an old pair of pants patched to the limit, aiming to conserve his decent suit. He went around the apartment cursing out the roommates while he threw the clothes into closets, let in the city-dead light and air. His stubble was sprinkled on his face in spots where the seven-shave-old razor blade had done him no good. Some red

pimples were in the midst of this scattered grass.

He looked like a scarecrow, getting around the place. He'd lost the meat on his bones in two years in the city, eating his own cooking and food long heated over.

When Bill came in he was washing the dishes. Bill went by into the living room, saying hello going by. Jim just said hello. Bill came into the kitchen with a steak, dropping the oil-papered package on the table.

"Have any luck to-day, Jimmie?"

"No, I didn't. I'm getting damn sick of it, too, I'll tell you. I looked into two agencies. Those birds are damn snooty after you've been in a few times. I damn near gave one a sock on the nose."

"Well, we've got this steak here for dinner, Jimmie."

Bill was a hard-muscled, medium-size, strong-jawed boy. His hair had a curly frizz, and his voice was nearly nasal. He was making thirty-five salary, and a swindle sheet.

He went on to the bathroom, which was along the hall from the kitchen. Jim put the dishes away and started peeling potatoes. Bill produced a noise of sloshing water around the ears, and up the nose, and through the teeth. He came up for air, and yelled, "Jimmie, where are my new razor blades?"

"I didn't see your damn blades. If I could have found any blade this morning I wouldn't be looking this way. I damn near cut my head off with the old hoe I had."

"Oh, come off it, Jimmie, where are they?"

"I don't know where they are. I haven't seen your lousy blades." He grumbled to himself, "Damn his blades, it'll be damn good if he has lost them."

He peeled potatoes, the shredded ends of his sweater waving in the wind. Bill was saying, "Well, damn that guy. You can't keep anything out of his way."

Bob ambled in, moving in a slow southern Texas way. He saw Jim first. "Hello, James, any change in the general situation?"

"No, damn it. I'm damn tired of hearing that question."

"Well, Jimmie, I'm not trying to get you sore."

"Jobs this time of the year are damn scarce, I'm telling you, Bob. Just get out and try to pick one up. The agencies can't land a thing for you."

Bob said, "Is that wild steer in yet?"

Bill said, "Hello, you dope."

Bob went on to the bathroom, standing in the doorway, holding his coat over a shoulder on one finger. "Well, sir," he said, "how're things?"

Jim was saying, "A hell of a lot they care whether or not I land anything."

Bill said, "No profits to-day, Bob. Had to take the boss and a whole gang to lunch. It'll take some gypping to come back on what that set me back."

"I've been out in the sticks. Feel kind of tired. Jimmie's got things pretty well cleaned up here to-night."

"Cleaned up my blades all right. Can't find a sign of them."

Jim was hauling out the steak, punching holes in it, and setting it over the gas oven burners. Then he sliced potatoes and set them frying. He cut the bread, washed up the porcelain sink, swept the floor, and filled up the dumbwaiter with the stuff to go out.

Bob came in and said, "I'll be with you in a minute, Jimmie, just as soon as I've put my coat and hat away."

Bob was shorter than Bill, with thin fine hair, flaxen, and blue eyes from Texas. He had a cowpuncher's bowlegged gait and talked about as much as a short-horned steer.

He found a packet of blades in his top drawer, his own blades. Bill was damn glad to have them and started anew. Bob brought down the dishes and the silver, setting up the kitchen table for eating.

Bill said, "Hey, how about eating in the living room? I'm tired of suffering in the dark

and dingy kitchen. Let's put on a little class for a change."

"All right with me," Bob said.

Jim said, "Well, come and get it out. You guys have got to do a little work for your grub. Come and get it out."

Bill said, "Well, Jimmie, make yourself look decent. You've been neglecting your personal appearance lately. Doll up a bit."

"What the hell! I look well enough for you guys. Why be so damned ritzy?"

Jim's grin faded quickly. Bill didn't come back on it. Jim was being given a ride, and the kidding was sour. For the two weeks since he'd been without a job he'd been living on food and lodging furnished by these roommates, and trying to make up for it by doing the dirty work around the place. Neither of them said anything outright about it to him, but Bill's voice was mean. Jim was too nervous; he couldn't take it easily.

They ate at the living-room table, all of the food being laid on at once. Bill and Bob were

in their shirt sleeves, and Jim retained his sweater.

"Well, Jimmie," Bill said, "still waving the old flag? When are you going to stop wearing those old rags? God, this steak is tough. Is this the best you could do?"

"Yes, it is, damn you. Cook it yourself if you don't like it."

"You know you got to do something for your keep, Jimmie."

Jim's face contorted, and tears came into his eyes. "Can it," he said. "I'll be keeping both of you guys some day, when I get the job I want."

The sleeve of his faded sweater shook as he waved his hand. Where the skin showed on his chin bone he was washy white. He started the percolator.

Bob broke the silence. "Jimmie, how'd you like to see your old girl again?"

"You mean Hazel! I wish to hell I could. She spends all her time at school."

"Well, we've got her all dated up with the other girls to come here to-night."

"Gee, that's fine, Bob. I'll have to get dolled up. Lend me a blade, will you?"

They put the dishes away in the stationary tub. With a new blade Jim really got some of the fuzz off. He sneaked a tie of Bob's, put on a clean shirt, and combed his dark hair after it had been well watered.

The girls came as he was putting on the tie. Bill went to the head of the stairs to greet them. "Well, well, well," he said.

Muriel was the best-looking of the three, wearing furs, and crowning them with a full wreath of hair. Her blue eyes had a mean look, mean with pride. She made a big noise about herself. She was Bill's playmate.

Annette was a small dark girl, with happy eyes and dimples. A girl with a good disposition, a sympathetic listener, and very quiet. She was right for Bob.

Hazel was calm and cool, rather dignified, and with steady blue eyes. She was being

trained to be a teacher, going to college after work, four nights of the week. Jim tried to see her often, anticipating a time when he'd be making plenty of dough and needing her to grace his home.

Bill broke open a bottle, with Muriel, in the kitchen. Jim and Bob were doing the honors for their girls and getting the gas and gossip. Annette and Bob whispered it to each other. Jim was doing everything for Hazel, taking her coat, admiring her clothes, quizzing her conduct.

Bill was saying, "You'll like this, Mew. I got it the other day from a friend of the landlady. We've had some of it. It's good, I'm telling you."

"I need to have some. Haven't had a drink in days."

Jim came in. "Hello, Mew," he said. "Gee, it's a long time since I've seen you. You're looking swell."

Jim's smiles were beaming.

"Well, Jimmie, you've dropped out of so-

ciety. You know I have my social duties. I'm not seen anywhere."

She turned to Bill. Jim said, "Yeah. Cut the ritzing. Are you going to be bartender to-night, Bill?"

"You're damn right I am. I'm going to watch where this liquor goes. I slapped down a week's salary to get it."

Jim had nothing to say. He walked out, and they didn't turn to watch him.

Bob was getting out the records in the living room. Hazel stood between the plush curtains at the window looking out into the street.

Bob started a record. Jim cleared the room for dancing. Bill brought in the drinks. They took a few fast swallows before dancing, laying the drinks on the shelf. Bill glided slowly along the hall with Mew. Bob and Nette put their heads together, dreaming away as if there were no others there. These two were wrapped around each other. It had been love at first sight, and at every other sight thereafter.

Jim started with great steam, whirling Hazel

around till she was dizzy. "Not so fast, Jimmie. I'm very tired."

"What's the matter with this party?" he said. "There's no pep in it. Let's go, boys."

There was no pep in it. Bill was sticking to Mew, Bob to Nette, and Jim had to be content with Hazel. It was no party at all, but a gathering of three couples.

While dancing, Jim bumped Bob and Nette, but they paid him no attention. Bill and Mew slipped into the kitchen for more drinks but brought no more out. Jim wouldn't go to the kitchen. He drank those left on the shelf, his own, then Hazel's, then Bob's and Nette's. He was eager to get it all under the belt.

Bob and Nette disappeared behind the portières, into the next room. Jim renewed the record, ready to go again, but Hazel sank to the couch. "No more dancing for me, I'm finished."

Jim persuaded her to lie in the other room on the bed he and Bill shared, Bob and Nette having taken the cot. Just when they had become comfortable, Bill and Mew came in.

Bill said, "Well, where do we fit into this party? A little room, Jimmie. Move over."

Jim said, "Oh, lay off, Bill. We just got here."

"Now, Jimmie, don't be a hog. Give a fellow a show. Move over. You act like an inmate."

Jim rolled out and stood up. "Well, damn you, Bill. You're a mean guy. You've been damn mean to me. When I first came here, I thought you were there. Since then, you've certainly shown your true colors. I want to tell you right here and now that I've felt pretty bad these last weeks. I've taken insults from you, Bill, right and left. Maybe you're so damned thick-skinned you don't know it."

His voice was choking. There were tears in his eyes. He stood with his head down, with his hands clenching.

Bill said, "Crack wise, Jimmie, will you? Wake up and look around you. Don't you know when you're getting a ride for your own good? Bob and I are trying to take it out of you, this damn conceit of yours that makes you

think you're too good for the jobs you can make. Get on to yourself, Jimmie, before you do yourself some harm."

"I won't lay on your damn bed. For my part, Bill, you can go to hell."

"Now, Jimmie, don't get mad. Don't be a small boy."

Bob said, "Don't get excited, Jimmie."

Jim went out to the living room, picked up a magazine, and sat on the couch beneath the reading lamp. Hazel followed, fixed the pillows on the other end, settled down, and closed her eyes.

Jim was trembling. He said, "He may think he's been good-natured about riding me, but a lot he knows about how I feel. Just because I've been out of a job and owe them a couple of bucks on food and rent they think I'm good for a razzing. I tell you, Hazel, they've been treating me like a dog. You'll see where the hell they get off when I land a job, and it may be damn soon."

"But, Jimmie, they're still good friends of

yours, probably the best friends you have in the city. After all, you should be thankful to them that you haven't suffered very severely these two weeks."

"Yes, and they've got that out of me too. Washing their dirty dishes and cleaning the house. They haven't lifted a finger around the house since I've been out of work."

He was looking down, staring at the magazine, unopened. His face showed in the light still not smooth-shaven. Powder covering the bad spots was especially spectral. The stitches were coming out of a patch on his shirt over the collar bone.

Hazel said, "Maybe you misunderstood them, Jimmie."

"I've learned my lesson from this experience, I'll tell the world. I'm getting it in the neck now, but I'm getting on to their rotten tricks. Believe me, I've been a fool once, and that's plenty to show up guys like these. It takes a break like this to show up your real friends all right."

The house was very quiet. The lamp behind Jim was the one light in the house. A streak of moonlight came through the plush curtains at the windows, the landlady's pride, and the beam streaked along the hall toward the kitchen.

"I've been in the blues most of the week," he said. "The times I was home alone, looking out on the street, watching people going by, and not knowing what was going to happen. That stuff can get you. I got pretty blue, doing nothing but that for a few hours."

Hazel was quiet, her eyes closed, her breathing regular. She'd been studying late the last few days; she couldn't keep awake. She was dozing off as Jim tolled out his woes. Jim moaned on, but he didn't have an audience.

A C-C GIRL

A C-C GIRL

DICK came up lower Broadway like a bullet out of a bonfire. His bonfire was a night-school laboratory. After four hours of teaching the elements of electricity in experiments, the trip up Broadway was like being able to talk to the moon. He was able to talk to himself a careless gibberish.

The street was black, very black, and blackest in the area surrounding the vaudeville house, outside the shine of the lights of the marquee. Other scattered areas had small light patches. The steady even black was soothing to the eyes. Only a few people were on the street, and, except for the taxicabs, the noises were the random ones of the life of the people living on the side streets.

He went by these without taking notice. He was happy to feel his body move, his legs hitting the pavement. At thirty-odd street he turned off to the C-C sandwich shop.

There were three girls on deck to serve the three deckers, two-deckers, and as much coffee as you could drink. On one of the semi-circular sections a couple of smart boys were kidding the girl. She was trying to ignore them. When she had put down their sandwiches she turned her back. This was the same girl who had been behind the food bar the last time Dick was in on his way home from the school.

She was a quiet girl, and very holy. She was there to do her work and no fooling with the customers. She had light soft hair, a turned-up Irish nose, light Irish eyes, and a placid rare-smile face. Her ankles were exceptionally slim. For a medium-height girl she had small feet. She took the eye in the sandwich shop. The guys a few rows up and a few down were giving her an eye.

She looked into Dick's eyes as she took his

order for a peanut-butter and coffee. Dick didn't watch her in the stall. After one look he turned to reading a book. He knew there was no sense in making a play for a girl who had the attention of the ginks who came into this joint.

She made a mistake and gave him pimiento. He said, "All right, I'll take it."

"Oh, no, you'd better not, you may not like it. It's my mistake. I'll take it back."

The sandwich was gone before he could change her mind. She came back. "Of course you'll still have the trouble of waiting the extra time. I'm sorry."

"That's okay, I've got a few minutes to spare." He looked at the book.

"That must be a very interesting book."

He told her the title.

She hadn't heard of it. She said, "Oh," and went to get the peanut-butter, now ready on the back stand.

"It's a simple and direct story. I think you might like it."

"I'd like to read it."

"Well, take it."

"I'm sorry, I can't take it now. We're not allowed to take things across the counter."

"I'll bring it down to you when you've finished, shall I? What time do you finish?"

"Well, if you would really like to? At quarter of twelve. You can meet me at the stairway the right side of the front door going out."

Dick went to his room, set the alarm clock, slept for an hour, took a bath, and put on his new clothes. He got there at exactly quarter of, looked into the shop, and she wasn't there. There were three ash cans before the entrance she had named. In the stiff breeze blowing up the street, he kept himself warm walking up and down, his hands deep in the pockets of a heavy coat. He stopped for shelter in an entrance the other side of the ash cans. There were people coming out of the hotel, and people dropping out of the cabs into the next-door restaurant. A gang of wild college boys in

dinner clothes and fur coats got out of a cab and chased each other down the street.

Finally he squirmed past the ash cans and, peering in the door, saw a light go out upstairs, and then the girl came around the corner and down the stairs, her knees rising high, like those of a halfback. A slim blonde footballer.

"I'm sorry to be keeping you waiting. A crowd came in just as I was about to go off, and the late boy couldn't handle them himself. I didn't get out of the shop until a minute before the quarter, and I'm supposed to leave at half-past. Will you wait some more until I bring these keys inside?"

He watched her go inside, her neat small feet and ankles taking short steps. She was wearing a light-weight untrimmed blue coat and a close fitting gray hat, not so very new-looking.

"Here's your book, but I'll keep it until I'm leaving. Where do we go?"

"I want to go right home. I'm very tired. Sixty-sixth and Columbus."

"Oh, that's fine. It won't take long to get there." He took her arm and felt the heft of her coat. "Hell, girl, this is a light coat to have on on a night like this. Aren't you cold? Don't you want to put on mine? Let's take a cab, it's too far to walk to that subway."

"Oh, could we?"

On the corner they got into a warm, heated cab. She said, "This feels grand. How I've hated the thought of walking to the subway and waiting for a local on that cold platform."

"You'll freeze some night if you keep on wearing this thin coat. You shouldn't be wearing it in this weather."

"I might as well tell *you* that I'm wearing it because it's the best one I have. It's not so cold coming to work. I'm not as tired, and I can move faster."

She shivered into the space underneath his arm. He was in a corner. He shouted to the driver, "You might as well drive through the park."

"It's very good looking in the park at night

when the air is clear. You get a good look out of the black at the west lighted edge. You see that row of lights from Fifty-ninth up."

She looked up from her shelter. "I'm warm here. I don't know your name yet."

He told her. It was written in the flyleaf of the book. Her name was Alice Lane.

"I've been wondering if I should spell it Alys. Do you think that's too affected? But I don't like my name, it's too plain. My roommate's name is Margaret, and she's changed it to Margot since we've come to the city."

"Oh, hell. I thought you were a lone Cinderella girl, maybe working to support some young brother or sister. You have such aristocratic ankles."

She blushed. You could feel it. "Do you think so? I have a hard enough time supporting myself, and if it weren't for Margot I'd give it up and go home and try to make up with my father. But it was really awful at home. My father wouldn't let me out of his sight. I couldn't go any place, not even to the movies,

at night. Margot was down here, and she was making out all right and not going to the dogs, as everybody home expected. I got tired of listening to the old man. I told Mother I was going, but I skipped out without telling Father. He thinks I've gone to the devil. He won't allow my name to be mentioned in the house. Mother has to hide my letters. So I can't write home for money, I have to make my own. Now, do you think that's a good way for my father to act?"

"Fine way for him to send you to the devil, if he really wanted to, as I suppose he does. He's gone so sour the sweet curdles in him. I know those old curds. But your mother must be sweet to make up for him."

"Oh, Mother's a dear. She's the only thing I miss."

"You're too quiet to be in a big city. You might be eaten up and nobody'd know it. You should have stayed home and beaten the old man and got your proper husband."

"I couldn't stand it to go back. Some differ-

ence to come home and listen to Margot's crazy yarns about the things that have happened, than to hear my father's voice saying, 'Alice, it's time for bed.' I stay up as long as I please, but I'm usually in bed as soon as I come home. Oh, the thing I like most now is to go to bed. But I'm crazy about the city."

"You'll get over that if you ever get sick. You haven't any extra money for the doctor, have you? What does Margot do?"

"She works for a dress designer. She makes beautiful, wonderful clothes. I wish you could see the evening wrap she made for herself. And it cost her next to nothing. It's just a dream, Dick. I'm going to borrow it some time when I'm invited to a particularly swell party."

She was warming up. She recited without moving from her position. Her feet were tucked up underneath her.

"Margot's crazy about a boy who goes to Columbia. He's off his nut about her too. Wants to leave school and get married. That's their daily argument. He says he can't see enough of

her this way when she has to work all day and he has to go to school. They only see each other about every night and as many times at lunch as he can skip classes. I think he'll be fired out of school if he doesn't spend less time with her and more studying. She makes him bring his books with him nights, but he doesn't do much studying. They're the mooniest couple I've ever seen."

"The moon has a bad influence. They'll get married and be in a hell of a pickle. Life in the city is rough on rubes."

"Oh, I'll bet you haven't been here long yourself."

"That's why I say it's rough. I'm not having all the good breaks."

"I've had some luck. The first day I came I got my present position. The woman interviewer was very nice and kind, Dick. She told me how difficult it might be handling a certain kind of fresh customer. But she said that if I did well at all I could soon work as a cashier

or a hostess. She said they needed girls they could trust. That's why I took the night shift. None of the girls like it, but your work gets more attention, and very often you handle the cash register. When she had explained the work she gave me a booklet containing the rules of the organization. She said if I was willing to follow them, I could come back and go to work the next day."

"That's a good line of boloney. A little wise kindness will save the organization plenty dough."

"Oh, no, Dick. They're very nice and very strict. It's very hard to live up to the rules. The chief one is that the customer is always right. It's awfully hard to remember this when those smart-alecky guys try to get your goat. They say you've got the order wrong. They get four or five cups of coffee just to keep you moving. And then they stare you up and down, as if they'd never seen a girl before. I get so mad now I could pour the steaming coffee out

of the percolator down their greasy necks. But the first few days I used to cry for half an hour when I went upstairs to get dressed."

"I told you it was rough on rubes. Let them look. What the hell do you care? These guys look at everything with skirts on, even the models in the dress-shop windows."

"I have to keep quiet, but they bother me terribly even yet, always trying to make a pick-up. It isn't often that a nice boy like you comes in, who doesn't look at a girl in that awful way."

"Sure, I do it a little more easily. You don't know how nice I am. I'm an X quantity, totally unknown."

"I know enough. I knew from the first night you came in the shop. I thought: 'At last there's one nice boy in the city.' I was wishing that you'd speak to me. But I had to speak first. You didn't pay the slightest attention, Dick. I was very hurt."

"I spoke to you to-night, didn't I?"

Just as the cab came out of the park she

turned up her face and was kissed. The road bounces knocked their chins together. He said, "Hang on, kid, it's worth fighting for."

"Oh, you're pretty smart. Like to pretend you're tough."

He followed her into the hall of the apartment house. Every other two minutes some man came home from the delicatessen with a boloney, and potato salad. They were quiet as he passed, watching from the corner of his eye. A giggly girl stood farther down the hall, closing with her boy pal when the hall was clear.

Alice said, "Dick, I guess you'll have to go. Mother Milgrim gets so many complaints from the other tenants about her girls being in the hall nights. They say that if she can't bring him in her room, it isn't respectable to be with him. Mother made us all promise to leave him at the vestibule. But I didn't want to see you go so soon."

"Oh, hell, I haven't started to tell you about those eyes. Why don't we go upstairs? We'll miss the ones on the lower floors. They must

be doing something wicked themselves to be up at this late hour."

"Will you go up the last flight very carefully? Because the stairs creak. Mother would give me the very devil if she found me."

As they went up the last flight very carefully, a faint rippling sound came down from above. They gave it no attention. When they were sitting on the top step, they heard, "Hello, Lice."

Alice jumped up. "Why, beautiful, what are you doing here so late? Paul, haven't you an exam to-morrow?"

"Yes, he has, but he says he'll flunk it anyway. We've been to a show. The last few hours I've been spending trying to get rid of this vermin."

She tugged at the black wires of hair of a lean boy whose hat lay on the step above and whose head lay on her lap. Her own hair was tumbled out in a confused scramble. The two were flushed and giddy. A neat row of hairpins lay on the step below them.

Alice introduced Dick. She stood by his side with her arm in his. "Dick knows all about you two, because I've been telling him these very last few minutes. He says you may be in a bad way if you don't watch out."

"Yes, I said there may be a couple of suicides if you two try to live on love."

Margot said, "This nut here says he'll be driven to suicide if I don't marry him for Christmas. I wish you'd speak to him. I can't. I hope you told a good story, Lice, about our romance and troubles, so that if your friend Dick knows any philanthropic millionaires he'll refer at least one of them to the proper parties."

Dick said, "All your trouble is romance. When you're a white-haired old couple sitting before the fireside you'll both sigh when you remember these happy days. How wonderful they were! The young folks no longer suffer those kind of hardships for their love. You'll wonder how you ever pulled out of it."

Alice said, "Shhh, you'll wake the old dragon

on the other side of the door. Margot, darling, did you see the boloney and sardines go in tonight? He passed us in the hall and gave me a dirty look."

Dick said, "You girls have your family characters."

Margot said, "Oh, yes, that was the fifth time, I think, that this burr started to go. He went down ten steps in ten minutes and then changed his mind and snapped back. Now I'll have to get all dressed up again to say good-bye. What time is it? It must be nearly one. I guess these boys have got to leave. Even Mother would begin to believe something about her holy angels if we got in much later than this."

Alice took Dick to one side of the hallway. She said, "It's been very nice of you to take me home. It was heavenly warm in that taxicab. You can't know how I appreciated it."

He said, "Well, I'll see you again, won't I? I want to hear what you think of this simple and direct story."

"You'll be coming in the shop again some time, won't you?"

"Sure, or else I can write you a note. You haven't got a telephone here, have you?"

She gave him the number. "Good-night, Dick, I'm very pleased to know you." He kissed her.

"Are you coming along?" he said to the other lad.

"Yeah, I'll be with you."

Alice leaned over the balustrade to wave as he went down. He was down two flights before the other fellow got on the way. The giggly girl was still closed when he reached the hall. He yawned as the boy reached him.

"Gee, I'm tired. Have you got far to go?"

COLD TEST

COLD TEST

THE little Ford hopped steadily across the great plain of snow, one little dot among a small number of others tracing unsteady thin tracks in the falling white dust. The snow had over it the pale purplish cast of a weak bluey early morning light, which wasn't going to get any better. It blew up over the Ford like a drift of free electrons, but lay onto the tin sides like a wet blanket.

The Ford went on steadily, showing no signs of heeding the continued freezing temperature. A cloud of steam vapor rising over the radiator froze as it rose. The engine was snug in a blanket. The wheels screeched a freezing whine, scratching for a hold on the road.

Marsen was driving, Harrison in the front

seat beside him. Trillis sat in back with the meters and equipment. Harrison held onto a blowing flap, barely a tip of his hand showing outside the blanket which wrapped him around like a papoose. Once a block at the least Marsen let go the wheel and beat his arms across his chest.

"I'm certainly praying this Ford doesn't die on us," he said.

The ammeters, voltmeters, wattmeters, condensers, instrument transformers, telephones, coin collects, headsets, protectors, wires and tools, a wave analyzer, a calibrating motor-generator set, and an acoustic shock set-up, were packed into the back along with Trillis. He had a blanket around him, another held up as a shelter from the wind; he was huddled into the shelter. When the flap got away from Harrison, a wind breezed across his ears and down the back of his neck. When they took a curve, a cold glossy meter slid across his hands and his knees. As a heat reservoir, he was being steadily depleted.

There were no traffic stops. They went on and on as travelers in a strange country, on the watch for the name of a street. One street was like another, following each other like so many ammeters, voltmeters, wattmeters. In the bleary light, a random man or woman buckled before the wind, or was driven before it. A door blew open to let one into his appointed home, was rammed shut, and the house front was then as blank as any other.

Without warning they came upon their street, turned the corner, and there was a neat and trim building, the substation. The one little door into this rampart was locked. They rang the emergency bell.

Marsen said, "We're on these south branch tests. Want to have a look at the station grounds. The circuit from the test car had an open in it last night."

The operator let them in. Marsen blew on his fingers as they came out of his gloves, walking on to the basement door. The station was warm.

Harrison said, "This is more like it." He followed Marsen to the basement.

Trillis stuck in the operating room. He opened his coat, straightened his shoulders, rubbed the frozen finger tips. A group of rotary converters, spick and span, stood on the main floor in front of him. One alone was spinning; the others sat like fighters waiting for the gong. There was scarcely a murmur from the commutator, not even the bizz of an ionized wind. Trillis stepped over to look them over, the commutating poles, the rigged end braces, the gleam on the commutating copper. "Damned good design," he said. The manufacturer's name was on the name plate for his assurance.

Marsen found the circuit ground well made to the station water pipes, by means of a copper strap bent around the pipe. He soldered the connection between the wire and the strap as an additional precaution. He then followed its path out of the station.

It left the station through a window, traveled down the building to an outside insulating pin,

up to a telephone pole near the station, over the street and down to the railroad on the pole line, then down to a cross-under between the ties, thence along with the tracks, lying between them, the three and a half miles to the test car, covered with snow the whole distance.

At the cross-under he found the open. The wire had been blown up on the rail and bitten apart by the car wheels. He spliced it and spent some time puzzling on how to get the splice soldered. No chance of using an electrical soldering iron, and an iron heated in the station would be too cold to melt the solder after having been carried so far. He wrapped it with copper wire, taped it, and anchored it against the chance of another opening with a track tie thrown across it.

Harrison and Trillis had followed him. They stood by shivering while he made the splice. Harrison jigged and waved his arms in order to stimulate the blood circulation. Trillis dug his hands in his pockets, drew his neck into the top of his coat collar.

Marsen said, "Damn good thing we found that thing so close to the substation. It's some little walk to the test car. What's that, Trillis? Would you just as soon do it?"

"No, let's go back where it's warm."

"Hell, no, we've got to finish the job."

Marsen went along the track straightening the wire out, coiling slack, and anchoring at as many points as he could find stray track ties strewn between the tracks. Trillis followed. Not once did those hands come out of his pockets.

"Well," Marsen said, "that ought to stay for a while now, at least until it drops a few more degrees, when we can send you out to fix it, Trillis."

"It looks all right to me now, I guess."

Harrison was at the Ford. They got back into it, turned it around, and headed for the test car. At first it seemed to be warmer, but gradually they came into the same freezing condition.

They traveled on a street parallel to the railroad, cut across it near the test car where it

turned through a ninety-degree bend, and drew up in an alley dead-ending on the railroad right-of-way. The test car could be seen above the high board fence of a coal yard, on whose siding it had been drawn up that morning. A flume of smoke rose from a makeshift chimney pipe.

Several other cars were standing in the alley. They unloaded the meters, carrying some into the test car and some into a garage intended to serve as field headquarters. Marsen wrapped around the engine of the Ford the two blankets Trillis had been using.

The coal-yard gate was wide open. Railroad and telephone linemen trekked in and around the test car, the alley, and the railroad right-of-way. A large sheaf of telephone wires was being transferred from the roof of the garage, where it had been thrown up out of the way, to the door of the test car. The railroad men were making the connections from the test car to the catenary and the track, to allow of short circuiting one to the other.

In the test car a roaring fire was going in a small iron stove. Some of the railroad men were sitting around it. The test car was simply an old box car, revamped to include the switching equipment necessary for applying short circuits. The switch, an air-break type, stood one side of the door, which had been left in its original position, midway of the long side. The space on one end was occupied by the stove and a coal box, and on the other by a bank of storage batteries. Two oscillographs symmetrically located to the door occupied a good part of the remaining space. Between the oscillographs, and between the storage batteries and one of them, space was available to locate the telephone equipment. Two porcelain bushings came through the roof above the switch, and from them depended to the switch two heavy copper-stranded cables.

Marsen drew in the wire sheaf to the terminal test board, connected the wires, and began ringing through the circuits. At their other termini, the substation, and several points along the

track were men of the local telephone company, who were to make either measuring circuit connections or special observations. In ringing them down, Marsen was checking out the circuit, and checking their presence on the job. He gave them final report and dispatch routine.

Harrison was going over the leads between the test board and the oscillographs. Trillis was fuddling with the telephone test set-up. This was his first test. He was awkward. He skinned a wire badly, wasted time getting the wires connected, and was all at sea on the desired telephone circuit.

"Where do you want this A-1 lead, Marsen?" he said.

Marsen had rung out all the circuits. He was computing oscillograph calibrations. "A-1 wire?" he said. "What are you working on, Trillis? Hell, yes, put it there."

He got up, went over the connections Trillis had made, made the necessary corrections, drew a wiring diagram, and finished the job himself. Meantime both oscillograph operators

were asking for calibrations, railroad men were asking when he'd be ready to go, and the outside men were crabbing about the cold. He sent Trillis to the garage for needed meters and assigned him the job of preparing data sheets on a prescribed form.

The railroad linemen working on the connections were uniformly tall, straight, and young. They were well set for the weather in heavy woollen shirts and stockings, fur caps, sweaters, leather jackets, and high laced lumbermen's boots, well rubbed with neat's-foot. They had the long-gaited careless carriage of the legendary heroes, as if in every age the type found a different and proper occupation. Like the emperor's warriors, they were unbreakable before the cold, as little unadapted to the season as the warriors to the lance.

As the knight had a squire, so the lineman had his "grunt." A "grunt" maintained the tools, handed them as they were needed, went out for sandwiches. A "grunt" was a carry-all boy, and he had his lowly troubles. A "grunt"

became a lineman after three years, if he lasted that long.

Running the short-circuiting leads, a "grunt" was stationed along the track a hundred yards each way, watching for trains. A lineman went up a ladder resting against the catenary, hauled up the bare copper cable coming from the roof of the test car by pulling on the rope of a pulley secured to the catenary. A "grunt" held the cable on the car roof. The lineman fastened the cable to the messenger, drew it taut, then leaned far off the ladder to see if it was in position so that the pantagraph wouldn't strike it.

The track lead was run along the ground, through the coal-yard gate, and along the fence, to an impedance bond, which connected together all the tracks at that point.

When these connections had been made Marsen and Harrison checked all the telephone test set-up. Harrison had made final resistance and continuity tests. Marsen had the last word with the outside men. They were ready to go.

Both oscillograph operators were tuning up

their machines, adjusting the light spot position, listening to the timing contactor. The contactor was driven by a tuning fork, and a rapid even hum was emitted.

The railroad engineer in charge and the operating super were examining a train schedule specially devised to show the time interval during which trains would be in the test sections. They needed for each test an eight-minute interval, at the least, during which no trains would be in the section. With high-speed circuit breakers, the short circuit would be cleared within a few hundredths of a second; the additional time was necessary both for preparations —in giving instructions and making temporary connections in the track circuit—and for substation switching necessary to put the section back into normal operating condition.

Having selected a time, the operating super stood by a special dispatch telephone to the substation and issued the switching instructions to the substation operator. Marsen gave instructions to the outside telephone men and

received their reports. The oscillographs were set with the correct series resistances and started. The test board was plugged, and Trillis closed the switches on the telephone set-up. Harrison held to his ear a specially arranged telephone receiver, waiting for acoustic shock.

The little knife blade of a pendulum switch, auxiliary to the main switch, was opened into position. "All set?" Marsen nodded. The super nodded. The pendulum was released. It swung through its arc, closed the little knife blade onto the waiting jaws of its switch, which operation closed battery onto the control circuit of the air-break switch. The air break closed with a hammer blow, the test car shook, the oscillograph films whirled in a circle. In five hundredths of a second the high-speed circuit breaker at the substation had cleared the short. When the operator reported, they opened the air break by hand.

The outside men reported that the catenaries had swung together. Someone had seen an arc beginning on a tower insulator. Harrison got

a slight bat on the ear. One of the protector blocks was pitted.

"It's christawful cold out here," said an outside man. "When's the next one?"

"Come back on in a half hour," Marsen said.

After letting out of the car the men who had no work to do in the dark, they closed the door and covered a few chinks in the car sides. It was black throughout the car, except for the dim red light by which the developers worked, the rich cherry red about the base of the stove, the red dot at the end of a cigar which glowed from point to point as the man moved. Marsen and Harrison stood by, watching the films being developed, smoking cigarettes. Trillis curled up on the coal bin, at last out of the way and the necessity of appearing to be doing something.

He was surrounded by railroad men, linemen, signal men, engineers. The linemen were talking about fights in the bunkhouse. Poker games started the battles, and an order had recently been issued to stop them. The engineers told the stories of other tests.

The films were bathed in emulsion in one pan, washed clear in water in another, then examined in the red light. The trolley, and one of the track, current waves came out well, but the telephone-circuit voltages could hardly be seen, much less measured. Something was "wet" on the calibration. One vibrator was a deadhead. After a good deal of trouble they found the error in the calibration and an hour later were ready for the next test, three possible testing periods having passed in the meantime.

Trillis came off his perch sleepily, stood around like a stray cat.

"Christ, Trillis, what in hell are you waiting for?" Marsen said. "Get going, man, we've got to finish this stuff to-day."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Set up those switches, will you? Have you got all the calibrations in the data sheet? Well, get moving."

"I didn't know you wanted me to do that."

By the end of this test Trillis had his routine settled; Marsen so arranged it that he'd be out

of the way. He was to set the switches, examine the protector blocks, make the record of the date, time, calibrations, operations, observers, weather, and remarks.

At lunch time Trillis went to a restaurant with the railroad engineers. Harrison and Marsen stayed at the test car, working out modifications in the test plans. Sandwiches, fruit, and two bottles of milk were brought back to them.

When another of the six oscillograph vibrators burned out in the afternoon they were fairly crippled. The tests had been scheduled to finish at five that night, but this reduction in capacity forced them to go on far into the night. The outside men became disgruntled as they gradually became numb. The railroad men showed the effects in the dreariness of their spirits. Marsen alone held onto the drive with which he had started the tests. By his insistence they continued until eleven, when the super absolutely called a halt. He was obliged to be on his regular job at six in the morning, and this was his limit.

The outside men, getting the news, said, "God be praised. Signing off, gentlemen, we're through."

Marsen, Harrison, and Trillis waited with the operators after the railroad men had left. The films of the last test were being developed. From inside the darkened closed car they heard the random noises of the leaving, car doors slammed, motors starting, whining in the cold, then a waning throb, then silence.

Marsen lighted a cigarette and blew out a vast cloud of smoke, faintly visible in the red light. He said, "My God, this feels good. This is the first cigarette to-day that I've been conscious of smoking."

Trillis was on his old perch on the coal bin, his eyes continually closing. Harrison smoked, too, a little tired, not completely done in. The oscillograph operators were both sleepy and too tired to answer the questions Marsen asked them.

Marsen looked over the completed films carefully, taking his time, very much interested in

the waves. The operators put on their coats and left immediately. Marsen finished, put the films into an envelope and into his pocket, so that he might look at them again at the hotel, and then they climbed down out of the car, heaved the door to and padlocked it.

The gate had been closed. They climbed a high coal pile and scaled the fence into the alley. It was fiercely cold. Their ears were freezing.

Trillis got into the back of the Ford, wrapping himself in the blankets. Marsen pushed the self-starter and got no answer. He continued, but with no result. Harrison got out to crank. The engine was dead from the cold. Harrison cranked half turns while Marsen tried various adjustments of the spark and gas. Once she gave a faint chug and a wheeze.

Marsen got out, asking Trillis to work the controls, and gave her a spin. She murmured gently. She was reviving. He continued to give her the whirl. She coughed and gasped and almost rose from her bed of illness. But she couldn't manage it.

Marsen spun her a good half hour. They could have left her in the cold, as it was only a short walk to the railroad station, but Marsen was going to care for her properly.

Then Harrison went to the house back of the garage, convinced the lady he meant her no harm, and brought back a kettle of hot water. He poured the water over the engine, and especially over the manifold.

Marsen spun her once. She started to go, but Trillis lost her at the controls. He spun her again; she caught, hesitated, then ran steadily and evenly. Marsen rushed to the controls, raced and slowed down the engine alternately. Harrison returned the kettle. He climbed in, and they were off.

"You know now what a test is, Trillis," Marsen said.

Trillis was cuddled into his shelter. He was so cold he could not make his answer heard.

THE END

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